

DOMAINE DE LA ROMANÉE-CONTI

2015 VINTAGE OFFERING



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2015 VINTAGE HARVEST REPORT

THE VINEYARDS CELEBRATE THEIR INSCRIPTION TO THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

As always, we are delighted — but perhaps even more so this year as the 2015 vintage is most impressive — to give our thoughts on this harvest, which we have just experienced, and to highlight the prominent elements that shaped this exceptional vintage. If we send this report later than usual, it is because the vintage was so outstanding and bewildering in every way that we preferred to wait until we had a clear idea of the wines after the fermentations in barrels. Nature has indeed taken to the extreme all the factors that are necessary to make the great wines of Burgundy, but without ever going beyond the balance point.

Let us first remember that 2015 was marked by a great moment full of emotion for Burgundy: the inscription of the “Climats du Vignoble de Bourgogne” to the UNESCO World Heritage list by unanimous decision of the 21 member-countries of the World Heritage Committee on July 4 in Bonn, Germany. The committee thus recognized Burgundy as the birthplace of the terroir-based viticulture; a viticulture rooted in a long history, a model for viticulture all over the world, one that was developed and thrived by creating a culture in which one must respect and protect its integrity if we are to pass it on to the next generations.

In 2015 it was indeed as if the vineyards had wanted to celebrate this prestigious distinction by being more beautiful than ever throughout the year, and more generous by giving us some of the most beautiful grapes ever produced. Even today, at the time of this writing, they show their most beautiful autumnal dress, and their leaves, which the summer has left intact, are glittering like never before with shades of fawn, purple and gold, announcing their impending dormancy. These colors are also at the origin of the name “Côte d’Or,” which this region bears now for eternity.

Winter was mild. The lowest recorded temperature was -6°C around February 12, and the heavy rains provided a solid reserve of water that was very useful to the vineyards through the rest of the year given the dry season we experienced.

This trend of hot and dry weather first announced itself in the mild and dry spring, except for two episodes of violent rains on May 1 and June 15 that arrived at the right time to bring a dose of humidity that the vineyard was beginning to require.

This dry and hot weather accompanied by the constant northern wind, friend of the vineyard and the winemaker, had a determining impact on the harvest by creating the conditions for an early, very rapid and exceptionally homogeneous flowering. We did not observe any coulure and practically no millerandage.

“A harvest like this does not resemble any other one. The berries are small and compact with no sign of millerandage, and their skins are tight and full of anthocyanins and ripe tannins. The yields are moderate, and the early and ultra-fast flowering ensured an exceptionally homogeneous and complete maturity, without ever reaching over-ripeness.”

July was hot and dry, even scorching, between July 2 and 8, with night temperatures of 30°C. During the whole month only 14mm of rain were recorded. The heat was such some days that the evolution of the grapes was stopped. But we could see berries beginning to change color in Romanée-Conti and in Corton as of July 27.

The first two weeks of August were humid and mild, without any heat spikes. The vines could breathe again and the grapes ripened quietly. Mid-veraison occurred around August 9, and we knew then that the harvest would take place in early September.

During the last two weeks of August, the northern wind set in with beautiful dry

weather and unseasonably high temperatures, especially at the end of the month when we went through a three-day heatwave.

All along, the vineyards remained perfectly green, healthy and connected to all the astral and telluric forces that give them life. They liked the dry weather in 2015. The July heatwaves stopped their evolution at least twice, but each time these were counterbalanced by stormy episodes that brought the needed humidity. As a result, the evolution of the vineyards was nearly ideal and thanks to these exceptional weather conditions, 2015 was a rather easy vintage for the vigneron. We could always intervene in the right place at the right moment, whatever work had to be done: composting, soil cultivation, manual work or phytosanitary treatments.

But since perfection is not of this world, some treatments, although exceptionally few, were essential at a time when there was a cloud on the horizon: oidium. This fungus that thrives during cold and damp nights took advantage of the rare rainy episodes of the spring to develop in the areas of Nuits-St-Georges, Vosne-Romanée and Flagey-Échézeaux.

This attack forced us to be very vigilant, even if the dry weather and the northern wind were of great help in eradicating this fungus. Our vineyard manager, Nicolas Jacob, and his team triumphantly managed a situation that was complicated by the fact that the sulfur we use against oidium loses its effectiveness above the 30°C temperature we often experienced in 2015.

At harvest time we had grapes of impeccable quality, rather compact, but average in quantity. The skins of the berries were extraordinarily thick and full of anthocyanins. These thick skins had been forged by the sun, whose intensity went so far as to burn some of them, and the bouts of successive storms. Not the slightest trace of botrytis was present. But the most remarkable fact, which was also linked to the early and rapid flowering, was the level of maturity of the grapes. This homogeneity of flowering logically resulted in

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a maturity of the grapes that was both consistent and extreme, but without ever becoming over-ripe as was the case in 2003. We noticed this balance in the analysis of the grape must at harvest time and today in the wines, the acidities being in perfect balance with the tannins and the rather high alcohol level.

We started the harvest in Montrachet on September 4. The weather was dry and mild. The Chardonnay vines ripened extremely fast due to the very hot days of the second half of August, and the very fast, consecutive rise of the sugar content led us to harvest this vineyard first. As a result, the grapes were ripe, of the highest quality and superbly golden, predicting a very great white wine. This was also confirmed by the first tastings of the wine, which is currently finishing its malolactic fermentations in barrels.

On September 5, we harvested the Corton and noticed that our pre-harvest impressions were right, i.e., the Pinot Noir grapes that we picked were in perfect health and very ripe. Thanks to the strong skins of the grapes there was no trace of botrytis, even on the second generation grapes (verjus) that we left on the vines and waited until the end of October for them to ripen and make the dabbler vignerons happy!

After a day off on Sunday, September 6, we started the harvest in Vosne-Romanée on Monday, September 7. Our instructions to the harvesters were the simplest we have given in recent years since there was no botrytis and only the burnt berries were to be removed from the clusters that had been the most exposed to the sun. There were also some “figgy” berries, that is to say, extra-ripe ones, but these of course had to be preserved.

The beautiful, dry and mild weather lasted until September 12, a day of heavy rains, but we were already in the Échézeaux, the last vineyard harvested, which we finished on September 14.

Here are the harvest dates and approximate yields:

Montrachet:	September 4	30 hl/ha
Corton:	September 5	22 hl/ha
La Tâche:	September 7-8	25 hl/ha
Richebourg:	September 8-9	24 hl/ha
Romanée-St-Vivant:	September 9-11	26 hl/ha
Romanée-Conti:	September 10	22 hl/ha
Grands Échézeaux:	September 11-12	30 hl/ha
Échézeaux:	September 12-14	25 hl/ha

The perfectly completed phenolic maturity of the grapes led us to choose to make the vinifications with the whole clusters, i.e., without destemming. Such vinifications are always a challenge. These were masterfully carried out by Bernard Noblet and his team.

Fermentations were rich, powerful and extremely long (21 to 23 days depending on the wine) due to the high polyphenol contents of the

grapes and their high sugar content. Many small berries, whose skins were exceptionally strong, released their juice only at the end of fermentations and even, for some of them, only under the force of the wine press.

The wines were put into vats with a little sugar which continued the fermentation in barrels, bringing more suppleness and smoothness to the wines. Still today, in the silence of the cellar, we can hear the barrels whispering the song of the wine coming to life.

The wines have deep purple colors. On the nose there is fruit and tannins are ample in the mouth. There is no trace of over-ripening as in 2003, but all the opulence and richness of extreme maturity.

In the finished wines one can see their typical characteristics starting to take shape: power and balance for the Richebourg, strength with a note of licorice for La Tâche, elegance and length in the mouth for the Romanée-Conti, which is already above all the others.

—Aubert de Villaine, Co-Director
November 6, 2015



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CORTON

Since November 11, 2008, the Domaine has consented to lease the AOC Corton Grand Cru vineyards of Domaine Prince Florent de Merode, for a total of 2.2746 hectares in the climats of Clos du Roi, Bressandes and Renardes. Clos du Roi: 0.5721 hectares; Bressandes: 1.1944 hectares; Renardes: 0.5081 hectares



ÉCHÉZEUX

Of all the Domaine's wines, this is the most forward. It opens up sooner than the others, with a ravishing clarity of expression, uncomplicated and cleanly etched; a caressing softness cloaks a steely skeleton which permits it to evolve with elegance. He is the younger brother of Grands Échézeaux, the glorious elder whose fortune Échézeaux aspires to equal. It sometimes comes very close when it speaks with the muscular language of the conquistadors. Surface area: 4.6737 hectares



GRANDS ÉCHÉZEUX

It is "Grands" before being Échézeaux. It is a country gentleman, aristocrat and dreamer, who idles willingly with the unhurried step of his horse in a forest filled with the scents of sundry mushrooms, mosses, decaying leaves and of furtive small game, which spill forth in a multitude of shifting alliances. All of that is expressed with feeling, in a refined language — musical, concise and pure like the message of a Mozart quartet. Surface area: 3.5263 hectares



ROMANÉE-ST-VIVANT

Romanée-St-Vivant is flirtatious; one cannot help loving it. Behind this grace resides a strength in such perfect balance that, at first, it is imperceptible. Surface area: 5.2858 hectares



RICHEBOURG

This immediate neighbor of la Romanée-Conti escorts Her Majesty with good-natured ribaldry. It is a king's musketeer who likes company, likes to laugh and to sing, to feel that the somewhat brutal strength of his athlete's body is admired. Surface area: 3.5110 hectares



LA TÂCHE

Nothing evokes La Tâche so much as the wonderful portrait of Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne, which expresses the Cardinal's fiery and angular authority, a nervous hand posed on the hilt of his sword, while the sword itself is drowned in a luxurious cascade of ermine and velvet. La Tâche is elegance and rigor. Beneath the frequent firmness of its tannins, passion is aflame, restrained by an implacable, courtly elegance. Surface area: 6.0620 hectares



ROMANÉE-CONTI

"As if, in this square of earth, the gods had bequeathed us a memory of the fascinating vestige of a timeless perfection." —Richard Olney
The wine of Prince de Conti, she is velvet, seduction and mystery. It is the most Proustian of all great wines: Concealed in the secret perfume of fading rose petals of a Romanée-Conti 1956, is it not the intense and pure sensation of the recaptured past which arrests and enchants us? Surface area: 1.8140 hectares



MONTRACHET

"Incontestably of the first order of white wines from the Côte d'Or and probably of all the white wines of the world." —Dr. Lavalley 1855
Le Montrachet is a wine of unparalleled complexity, its elegance and power make an exceptional wine. Surface area: .6759 hectares



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