

Burgundy Report

By Bill NANSON

Château de Marsannay – 2017

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Tasted in Marsannay with Sylvain Pabion, 23 April 2019.

Château Marsannay

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The approach here is a blend of organic and biodynamic preparations, plenty of investment too. 45 cuvees from just over 40 hectares of vine. In the Spring of 2019 there was some small damage – “some lost buds in Puligny but in the Côte de Nuits we seem to have no damage that we can see so far,” said Sylvain.

Sylvain on 2018:

“A vintage that started very wet – there was double the rain in the Spring that we had in winter – the soils were very damp. We had no risk of frost, fortunately, but some big rain-storms – the canopy was luxuriant from the growth – the two together meant that the start of June brought with it a big worry about mildew, but fortunately thereafter it was dry – practically until November! Lucky the vines adore the warm and there we had this reserve of water in the soil – but it was very dry here – more than in the Côte de Beaune. So no big yields here in the north, particularly in those areas with not very deep or very draining soils – the vines certainly had some stress. The wines have a certain concentration, though fortunately also with plenty of freshness. We were very modest in the cuverie from the perspective of extracting and kept a keen eye on the fermentations too, in order to guard against volatiles and brett. The wines have taken some time to show their characteristics but it is now starting to show through the base of ripe fruit. Versus 2003 we have both a better pH and more freshness of fruit – a mouth-watering finish – they continue to improve.”

Sylvain on 2017:

“Versus 2018 we also had a hot and dry finish to the vintage but we also had more rain in August which allowed the grapes to fill and ripen more easily. This is much more a pinot vintage, yet a vintage that also needed no chaptalization as everything was so ripe. It’s a vintage that I think has everything!”



The wines...

I was very happy to see this set of wines – that last time I visited was for the domaine's 2014s which were a little oaky – and the 2015s in barrel were practically black! These wines have plenty of colour but in addition to plenty of concentration they have energy – the oak is – save 2 or 2 wines – anecdotal. This is a tourist destination so the wines will never be particularly cheap, but the quality supporting those prices in 2017, is very high – well-done!

All are bottled, nothing above 40 hl/ha in terms of harvest:

2017 Bourgogne du Chateau

Marsannay, Couchey and Marsannay Rosé are the assembly areas for this. A large part of these vines will be classed as Marsannay in 2020. About 25% whole clusters in this wine

Good colour. Hmm – a good concentration of textured fruit – it's a fine invitation. Hmm – this has a lovely energy, very fine texture and an energy to the flavour – juicy finishing too – a faint bitter chocolate in the finish – simply an excellent Bourgogne!

2017 Bourgogne En Auvone

Also probably a Marsannay label from 2020 – a little less than a hectare of vines here.

A deeper nose but with more beautiful fruit. Fresh, more incisive a tiny touch more tannin – more intense, more of everything – but no fat – direct, long, bitter chocolate again and for having a little patience – bravo – super wine!

2017 Bourgogne En Montreuil

Over 2 hectares, this with a little different elevage

A much tighter nose, practically a little biscuity reduction. More intense, again direct in style, fine salinity and drive. Also a wine to show a little patience with – I think excellent, but it's the tightest of these three – delicacy is not yet present.

2017 Marsannay Cuvée du Château

More than 10 parcels blended here.

More delicacy of aroma with floral and pepper additions to the fruit. Fuller in shape, lots of freshness, plenty of energy and a fine melting width of flavour. This is super and will get better and better...

2017 Marsannay Clos de Jeu

1.67 ha – 'and seems to offer a very regular style.' 40% whole-clusters used here. A large younger parcel of vines which are all destemmed, the older part of the vineyard is 100% whole-cluster.

Depth of dark fruit, just a touch lactic but that's very modest. Wide on the palate – transparent, fine precision, plenty of structural impression but without overt structure – a saline wine, and like the others with a super mouth-watering finish, touched by florals here. Wait 6 months – lots of finishing complexity...

2017 Marsannay Les Favières

One of the most complex geologies of all the parcels – very sunny here too. 60 yo vines from 0.67 hectares

A darker fruit, almost a little spiced, then floral – a little compact but will only get better. Hmm – more complex more open, slightly creamy, very mouth-watering – perhaps a touch of oak in here but this is concentrated, intense and absolutely full of flavour – it's excellent!

2017 Marsannay Grasses Têtes

'This was not an easy cuvée in 15 and 16 – it's quite a large parcel and so in 17 I kept just the best part of the vineyard for this cuvée, and I'm happy with this result – it worked in 2018 too!'

Much more floral energy to this nose with a little oak spice too. Rounder – mouth-filling, a subtle oak toast, but melting, mouth-watering flavour too. Love the shape and style of this wine, but I would wait 1-2 years for the oak-toast to fade. Lovely texture and very long too...

2017 Marsannay Les Es Chezots

Almost 2 hectares – 0.5 ha very old and practically dead so we will have to replant – the rest is pretty old too but in much better shape. Practically the latest area that we harvest...

A narrow nose – quite tight – some high-toned notes, almost a limestone type nose. Lovely in the mouth with an insistent persistence of flavour a wine that drives towards the mid and finishing flavours. For lovers of more acidic wines, yet the flavour is covered well by the fruit and with lovely texture – super!

2017 Marsannay Cuvée Les 3C

From 3 climats facing the cuverie, first blended together as there was so little in 2016 but we liked so made again in 2017 – but the three were separated again in 2018. Clemenjoux, Champs Salomon and Crais

Like all these wines, plenty of colour. Some width and plenty of depth to this textured, round nose – a suggestion of barrel too. Hmm, more depth to the flavour – a touch of tannin – structural but with great texture, floral and saline elements to the flavour – this is very fine and very long. Excellent!

2017 Marsannay Le Boivin

0.70 ha, very stony with a fault and some Comblanchien (Premeaux) limestone. About 25 hl/ha here in 2017. 70% whole cluster.

A compact nose, but one with a fine textural width – it invites. Hmm – energy – open flavour – the opposite of the nose – lots of floral accents to the fruit – very complex, a touch of barrel – creamy style. Super tannin, practically no grain. For the patient but this is top, a wine of tension – bravo!

2017 Marsannay Longeroies

From the high part of the vineyard, a little under 15% wc.

A little more impact of aroma a hint of menthol and spice but just an impression of tightness to the fruit – opening with time. Hmm, drive, energy, a little more clarity of flavour vs the Boivin, layered but fresh, textured and mouth-watering in the finish. A different character but equally great – bravo!

2017 Marsannay Clos de Roy

Mid-slope, less than 0.3 ha – but still important for us as it represents a certain style of wine from the appellation. Just over 2 barrels worth...

A compact nose but one that slowly grows in the glass – dark fruit, faint spice – but freshness too. Wide, energetic – not much padding but great depth of flavour – ooh this is special despite needing to open more – here you have everything. More floral finishing – fresh finish. Bravo...

2017 Fixin Petit Crais

Over 2 ha in Fixin, this the bottom of the hill. About 50% wc.

Deep, impressive latent but great invitation. A little more drive here, yet lots of fresh concentration. A wine that opens and opens – very wide and lingering in the finish – super – excellent wine.

2017 Gevrey-Chambertin

Plenty of northern Gevrey in this – Billards, Justice, some in the bottom and a little from the south – but essentially north and west – 1.70 ha. 20% whole-cluster – all the Justice was whole-cluster for example. 33-35 hl/ha – mainly because of the old vines.

Wide, deep concentrated, very different aromatic. Supple, layered – the texture different too – floral, delicious, subtly oaked, floral finishing – ooh a great villages – Bravo!

2017 Gevrey La Justice

Not all the Justice goes into the blended villages. This is all sold at the domaine.

Less wide but a nose of highs and lows – complex but still on a subtle level. A wine that's open, complex, mouth-watering – dark-fruited – juicy finishing. This is more juicy and intense than the villages – but that wine is clearly more delicious today – time will tell, but it's an excellent villages...

2017 Gevrey-Chambertin Champs Chenys

'Only 0.2 ha but always a charming place to work that brings a charming wine too. Separated first time in 2016, also done in 2018 - for me an exceptional terroir.' All destemmed.

A compact nose - dark-red fruited, faintly spiced - almost mulled - complex whilst never effusive.

Round, a fresh halo of flavour, a little creamy depth of flavour in the mid-palate. Beautiful texture - a wine like the Justice that is more to wait for than the blend - but excellent and with a fine lift of freshness in the finish.

2017 Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Bel Air

Next to Bèze just below the forest - stony, lots of Premeaux limestone - harvested 10 days after the Ruchottes yet always with good maturity. Almost all destemmed.

Open but needs time for the aromas to form - lots of interest and invitation here though. Bigger in the mouth - more energy, good structure - cushioned texture but not too much - layers of finely energetic finishing flavour. The energy does actually remind of Bèze and the length is super. Be patient but here is 1er cru excellence!

2017 Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Les Champeaux

Never more than 50 hl/ha - old vines, some as old as 100. 0.28 hectares. Some wc here

A more open nose, supple fruit aroma here - the merest suggestion of floral too. Round - mouth-filling, energy, and so mouth-watering with deliciously sweet but complex flavour. Easier to appreciate today than the Bel Air but maybe not better - but equally excellent until the finish - here this is brilliant - bravo!

2017 Clos de Vougeot

Coravined, vines opposite Grands Echézeaux - 0.27 ha in Garenne, 1920s vines.

A nice weight of aroma, floral and beautifully textured - not super-large but a very fine invitation.

Harder structure - relative - not a hard wine. There is more barrel here but plenty of mouth-filling volume and a real complexity. Long, structural, but very approachable - simply delicious wine...

2017 Ruchottes-Chambertin

Coravined. A single barrel and it's showing that today - a new 400l barrel. Next to Belair premier cru, replanted at start of the 1990s

Yes a vibration of reductive oak on the nose - but fortunately not the vanilla-style! Lovely in the mouth with drive, fine texture, concentration too - the barrel is marking this too much today though - wait at least 2 years - 3+ will be better. There is much positive to say about this wine - but be patient. It think it will be excellent!