

Tasted in Volnay with Etienne Chaix, 08 November 2018.

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My first time tasting alone with Etienne – Jean-Pierre was ‘recovering’ on holiday – somewhere warmer!

There’s been plenty of updating in the cellar – my first impression, more precise, less ‘character’ certainly less chaos – that’s half joking – though I may become a little sea-sick from the (new) wobbly typing table that has been installed for itinerant journalists – I have to assume that Neal Martin has loosened the screws for those that follow!

Etienne Chaix on 2018:

“2018 were very happy with the way the year unfolded. For us it was ideal; In the Spring the soil wasn’t easy to work as it was so wet, but thereafter not really any incidents. We started our harvest 30 August for 6 days – with a little less volume than 2017, but still generous. Pezerolles and Saucilles had a bit of hail in 2018, the Pommards were harvested a couple of days later, but more due to the extra rain they had in the summer. It’s probably a great vintage, certainly with more depth than 2017...”

Etienne Chaix on 2017:

“2017 – harvesting 6th September for reds but 31st August for the whites. The vintage like 2018; almost frost, we burned the straw and nobody can say whether it saved the harvest but after the trauma of 2016 we at least felt that we were not passive. A little rain just before harvesting avoided the chance for figgy or dry grapes – overall that was a help.”

The wines...



The whites were bottled the week prior to my tasting and were in very fine shape – there is much to recommend – their bottling is usually done before the harvest but because of the updating work in the cuverie there had been a little delay.

None of the reds were bottled – that would probably start in another three weeks – but all had been racked into tank about three weeks prior. The colours were modest – but that will be seen often in this vintage – more of a surprise was the modest depth and precision of aroma and equally, often inconsequential depth of flavour – though delicious flavour. Based on my many years of experience at this domaine I have to assume that my timing, in terms of their position during elevage, was poor and that it was just one of those days – I will try to taste a couple of the cuvées after bottling, to compare.

2017 Bourgogne Aligoté

Vines in the commune of Meursault; a small parcel of very old vines.

Hmm, pretty, precise notes. Wide and fresh but with a depth of concentration too – intense and refreshing in the finish. Delicious wine.

2017 Meursault Les Chevaliers

A fine nose with many pretty precisions. Extra volume, and depth of flavour a – different flavour profile, melting pure, beautifully formed wine – virtually no fat. Gorgeous and again refreshing. Top and very persistent. Bravo!

2017 Meursault 1er Les Cras

A deeper, pure nose, with pretty citrus references. Wide, incisive, less directly sweet but also with plenty of lithe muscle – sinews that wrap around your palate. Vibrant, but with measured length of flavour – this is so different to how the wine is when mature – the evolution is always amazing. Excellent wine!

Les Rouges:

2017 Bourgogne Pinot Noir Vieilles-Vignes

'Customers habitually buy this so it didn't seem necessary to change the label to Bourgogne Côte d'Or.' Vines in both Volnay and the first vines over the border into Meursault too.

A wine with some density of aroma, just a little tight today. Today the palate has a modest entry, fresh flavoured, deep, growing flavour – an easy wine that's tasty and fresh but no great concentration. The finish is, however very tasty and with a more overt purity of fruit in the finish.

2017 Volnay Vieilles-Vignes

From 5 different parcels; Grand and Petits Poisots, Gigotte, Pacquiers and Famines.

Like the Bourgogne, relatively modestly coloured. Another nose that doesn't want to play this morning. Fresh, open, elegant flavours that are a little floral and have more volume than the Bourgogne. A lick more tannin to be found here. The finish is, however, vibrantly delicious – hopefully a portent of the rest of the wine to come.

2017 Pommard Vieilles-Vignes

Normally from Cras, Saucilles, Vaumauriens and Poisot

Just a little more aromatic precision of dark berry fruit. Another turn of the volume control on the tannin, but without overt grain, just a touch of astringence. Fresh, lovely energy, and a great mouthful of fruit here in the finish. Hmm – a great character!

2017 Beaune 1er Coucherias

A little more aromatic density again – here with a nice line of pure fruit. Fresh, a direct wine – much more modest in the width, but with energy and excitement – much less astringence, indeed a silky line into a delicious finish – yum!

2017 Volnay 1er Cru Fremiets

Back to a deeper nose, but with some consequent fruit in that depth. Here the palate is less ready with a modestly reductive undertow. A little more Pommard in style but opening in the finish with a contemplative extra dimension of flavour.

2017 Volnay 1er Cru Caillerets

Planted in 1982. 'The tannins here always show a little more, a sort of rusticity' says Etienne – but I will add that in that we must read 'rusticity in a Caillerets context' not a context of say Pommard...

Still a nose 'under construction' but there is clearly something of Caillerets here with purer more floral notes on display. Hmm, a touch of tannin on entry but then fine, pure flavours in an open volume around the palate. Depth of beautiful complexity – but like all so far – airy wines, not wines of impact or overt concentration. Great finishing.... Excellent

2017 Volnay 1er Cru Champans

Also not a big nose, but one of silk and good purity. Extra volume and certainly extra energetic depth to the flavour. Beautiful mid to finishing flavours – a mini-waterfall of delicious flavour. As good as the Caillerets for sure...

2017 Pommard 1er Clos Micault

Old vines, 5x the volume in 2017 – but then there were only 7 cases of fruit in 2016 from the old vines!

Really a modest colour. Also like all so far and open if slightly inconsequential nose, some pretty fruit references but always on a modest level. Hmm, on the palate there is a little more depth showing here – and it's delicious depth of flavour, slightly sweet, maybe betraying a hint of oak. Vibrant, long and with the faintest touch of tannin – but less than Caillerets for instance. Delicious wine.

2017 Pommard 1er Cru Les Epenots

From Petits Epenots, in the last part before Beaune Epenottes, below Pommard Boucherottes

A nice freshness of fruit, the first to show some floral accompaniment. A more direct intensity to the fruit and line of flavour here. Vibrant, and persistent too – that's a great finish too – more tannin than Clos Micault, more like Caillerets or a hint more than that even – but delicious and incisive – excellent!

2017 Pommard 1er Cru Pezerolles

A little darker red fruit, freshness of aroma still the style. Supple, a little more depth of flavour,

the merest touch of reduction, but also seemingly more visible concentration than the other wines. Wide, complex, much more a complete wine than most in the cellar today – perhaps a twist of oak on the end of the palate. Super.

2017 Pommard 1er Cru Les Rugiens

Whilst still of modest volume, here is a nose with a very fine precision to it's small, sometimes (oak?-) spiced notes of complexity. Nice volume in the mouth, layers of pretty and complex flavour. Wide, a little vibration of flavour, tasty flavour, tasty wine – long too – lovely