

Domaine Joseph Voillot (Volnay)

This was my first visit to Jean-Pierre Charlot's Domaine Joseph Voillot, but I had intended to make an appointment here for several years now, as I have always liked the domaine's wines when I have had a chance to drink them- often at the neighboring restaurant of le Cellier Volnaysien, which sits just next door to the domaine in the center of Volnay. Finally, the domaine's US importer prodded me with samples of a range of lovely 2015s from Monsieur Charlot, which got me motivated to clear a slot in my spring itinerary for a visit to Domaine Voillot and a taste of their outstanding 2016s. And I am very, very happy that I did so, as the entire range was excellent in quality and this is very clearly one of the top addresses for first class Volnay and Pommard premier crus in all of Burgundy! Jean-Pierre Charlot is the son-in-law of the late, Joseph Voillot, who passed away in 2014. The two worked side by side for fifteen years, up until Joseph Voillot's official retirement after the 1995 vintage. Monsieur Charlot has just recently been joined by his nephew, Etienne Chaix, who will eventually succeed to the head of the domaine when Monsieur Charlot retires. I had the pleasure to taste with Monsieur Chaix on this visit, as Jean-Pierre had to be away on the day that scheduled a rendez-vous. The domaine has not been able to escape the long shadow of adversity faced by many vigneron in Volnay in recent times, with the heavy hail damage in the village in the three successive vintages of 2012, 2013 and 2014, the domaine was forced to sell its parcel in the premier cru of les Brouillards to help meet expenses. Happily, they still have superb holdings in Fremiets, Caillerets and Champans in Volnay and Pézerolles and Rugiens in Pommard, with their vines here all situated in the lower, Rugiens Bas section of the vineyard and having been planted in 1959.

Jean-Pierre Charlot changed a few things at Domaine Voillot once he took over the direction of the estate from his father-in-law, cutting back the percentage of new oak from thirty percent to between ten and twenty percent for the premier crus in most vintages. He also started destemming the fruit completely, where his father-in-law might retain a percentage of the stems for certain cuvées. Jean-Pierre Charlot also shorted the average time for the élevage of the premier crus here, so that they typically will spend fourteen or fifteen months in cask these days, followed by assemblage in stainless steel tanks for a month prior to bottling. Joseph Voillot typically would leave the wines in cask for a longer élevage. For the 2016 vintage, Monsieur Charlot decided to use no new oak at all for the wines. The 2016 Bourgogne rouge and villages level wines had been bottled at the end of August of 2017, with the premier crus here all bottled in January of 2018, so the wines had all bounced back nicely from their mise and were showing uniformly well at the time of my visit on the last day of February of this year. The domaine has a few additional bottlings beyond which those I tasted on my visit, and I look forward to trying

those in the more generous yielding vintage of 2017. While Domaine Joseph Voillot is best-known for its fine range of Volnay bottlings, the Pommards here are equally superb and were supremely elegant examples in the mold of the 2016 vintage. It was a lovely day to visit, with snow flurries drifting down on the vineyards in Volnay as I drove up to the center of town for an early afternoon appointment, and I found myself wishing I had made a reservation for dinner at Cellier Volnaysien during my trip (as the cuisine here is classically Burgundian and always excellent) to drink a bottle of older Domaine Voillot with the meal. Though this was my first visit to taste with the Charlot family, it will most assuredly not be my last, as the wines here were excellent across the board!

2016 Bourgogne- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The pinot noir vines for this bottling hail from the village of Volnay and are fifty years of age. Monsieur Charlot augments this by blending in a small parcel of Beaune premier cru as well, as the parcel is too small to make a proper cuvée. The 2016 Voillot Bourgogne is a fine example, offering up a very pretty and red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, a good base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, succulent and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and just a touch of backend tannin perking up the finish. Give this a year or two in the cellar to blossom properly. 2019-2030. **87.**

2016 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The domaine has just under two *hectares* of vines in their four parcels of Volnay *villages* level vineyards, with the average age of the vines here fifty years of age. The 2016 version was showing beautifully, offering up a pure and youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and already quite suave on the attack, with an excellent core, fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This will be lovely with a bit of bottle age. 2022-2050. **90.**

2016 Pommard “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The Pommard old vine cuvée from Monsieur Charlot also hails from four different parcels, but these are a bit smaller and the combined total is just over 1.2 *hectares* of vines. These are just a touch older than the Volnay average, being fifty-five years of age. This too was showing really, really well on the last day of February of this year, delivering a very elegant and sappy nose of red plums, cherries, a hint of dark berry, gamebird, woodsmoke and a complex base of soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really shows off the elegance of 2016 on the attack, with a sappy core, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. This is a very, very classy bottle of Pommard V.V. in the making. 2025-2060+. **90+.**

2016 Volnay “Fremiets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

Fremiets is often a very black fruity example of Volnay, but the Domaine Voillot version shows a lovely touch of red fruit as well in the 2016. The domaine has three differently aged parcels in Fremiets, all located at the top of the slope, where there is more chalk in the soil, which may account for the red fruity element in the 2016. The vines were planted in 1978, 1950 and 1932, so this too is an old vine cuvée, with the 1932 vines having still been planted in the *provignage* style with a can from the “mother vine” having been bent down into the soil to produce neighboring plants. The 2016 Voillot Fremiets is lovely, wafting from the glass in a vibrant blend of red and black cherries, sweet dark berries, *pigeon*, dark soil tones, raw cocoa, bonfire-like smokiness and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and

very elegant in profile, with a superb core, fine-grained tannins and excellent focus and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. Lovely wine. 2026-2060+. **92.**

2016 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

Monsieur Charlot’s parcel of Caillerets is his smallest, as he only has fourteen *ares* of vines here, which were planted in 1984 and are just hitting their stride at age thirty-two. The 2016 version here is excellent, offering up a classic aromatic constellation of cherries, a touch of red plum, stony soil tones, a bit of iron, coffee, gamebird and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with ripe, firm tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the complex and youthfully structured finish. This will be an outstanding example of Caillerets with sufficient bottle age. 2027-2065+. **93.**

2016 Volnay “Champans”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

This is the flagship premier cru bottling from Domaine Voillot, as this is their largest parcel, totaling 1.7 *hectares*. The vines are mostly quite old, with a section having been replanted after the frosts of 1984, but the vast majority here either dating from 1971 or 1934. The 2016 Champans *chez* Charlot is superb, soaring from the glass in a complex and very pure blend of red plums, cherries, a hint of orange peel, smoke, fresh herb tones, *pigeon*, a lovely topnote of spice and just a whisper of cedary wood from its older casks. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and loaded with sappy red fruit at the core, with a very soil-driven personality, great focus and grip and lovely structural tension on the long and ripely tannic finish. This is the best example of Champans I have tasted from the 2016 vintage! 2026-2065+. **94.**

2016 Pommard “Pézerolles”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The domaine owns just over forty *ares* of vines in Pézerolles, with the parcel just over fifty years of age. The 2016 Pézerolles here is a great example of this underrated *terroir* (one of the most elegant premier crus in Pommard), offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of red plums, cherries, a nice touch of mustard seed, raw cocoa, venison, dark soil tones and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a nice sense of sappiness, fine transparency, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This is first class Pézerolles! 2028-2065+. **93+.**

2016 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The Charlot family’s holdings in Rugiens are all in the *Bas* section of the vineyard, which has the superior *terroir* to the upper sector of Rugiens, with the vines here having been planted in 1959. This is a small holding for Jean-Pierre, as he has just over twenty-five *ares* of vines in Rugiens. The 2016 version is utterly classic and will be an outstanding wine when it is ready to drink. The nose jumps from the glass in a sappy and classy blend of red and black cherries, venison, a very complex base of soil, woodsmoke, mustard seed and just a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with great mineral drive, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and beautifully focused finish. Great juice. 2030-2075. **94.**

A Couple of 2015s From Domaine Joseph Voillot

Both of these wines were tasted here in New York in April of this year. It seemed to me that they had closed down pretty dramatically since their release, as has been the case with a great many 2015 reds, and it may prove that my scores end up being a bit conservative for the wines, but they will need some patience before they start to blossom.

2015 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The 2015 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes” from Domaine Joseph Voillot is a bit riper than the lovely 2016, but it is quite complex and focused. The sappy and quite attractive bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel, venison and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full, ripe and nicely transparent in profile, with a sappy core, tangy acids and moderate, seamless tannins adding grip on the long finish. This is a bit bigger than the 2016 version, as well as more structured and in need of some bottle age to blossom, but it will be a very good bottle in its own right in the fullness of time. There is just a whisper of backend heat here that belies the torrid summer of 2015. 2023-2050+. **88.**

2015 Volnay “les Fremiets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot

The 2015 Fremiets from Domaine Voillot is a bit less ripe and fruit-driven than the Vieilles Vignes bottling, offering up a very pretty nose of cherries, red plums, a touch of pomegranate, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, a nice dollop of fresh thyme and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite structured today, with a rock solid core currently bound up behind some firm tannins. The acids here are good and there is plenty of depth, but like many 2015s, this has shut down pretty dramatically since its bottling and will need several years in the cellar before it starts to emerge from hibernation. Like the Vieilles Vignes, this is showing just a tad of heat on the finish today. It will be a good bottle with sufficient cellaring, but I am drawn to the utterly classic style of the 2016 version, which aligns more with my palate’s stylistic paradigm. 2026-2060. **89+.**

