

*(R)evolution in vinifying the reds:  
Cuvées mainly comprising whole bunches*

This year, the majority of the red grapes from the Côte de Nuits, for which our philosophy of biodynamic cultivation now extends to the village and premier cru wines, were only partially destalked for vinification. The tests we carried out with this technique on a third of our red cuvées last year have proved conclusive and we are now applying it to 30-70% of our wines, depending on the cuvée – a first for the estate.

This traditionally Burgundian technique was abandoned for a long time because it brings with it certain risks in terms of abnormal aromatic profiles and astringent tannins when it is not correctly managed. It requires absolutely perfect raw materials that are very healthy and at optimum maturity. Partial destalking was possible this year because maturity met “phenolic” standards in terms of the berries, skins, pips and stalks, and “technical” standards with regard to the level of sugar and acidity. Moreover, the grapes had a lot of *millerandage* (with tiny berries, and dense, tightly-packed bunches), the skins were thick and the grapes in perfect health. All these conditions were thus wonderfully in our favor.

For the first time in years, our very precious **Musigny** was only partially hand-destalked because the high levels of *millerandage* meant 70% of the bunches could be left intact.

Macerating in less juice, the alcoholic fermentation takes place very gently inside the berries still attached to their stalks – not unlike carbonic vinification. And it is only at the end of vinification that some of the skins will detach from the stalk, others preferring to hang on. This technique brings greater complexity to the wine, particularly in terms of its aromatic profile.

## IN THE CELLAR

2009, AN ALREADY WELL-DEFINED STYLE  
VELVETY AND AROMATIC

As we write these lines in early October, the 2009 vintage is spending its last few days in the vat – those precious moments when it will acquire its style, richness and structure. This is a fundamental stage which will decide if the wine will be a good one or if, glorified, it will become a great one – something towards which we strive, *bien sûr!*

Of course it has yet to undergo the malolactic fermentation which can transform a wine but this secondary fermentation will have a lesser impact this year because the wines have shown very low levels of malic acid. It won't hurt just once to start talking about a style that is already defining itself and which the ageing process will further hone.

**For the reds**, the wines are very aromatic and pleasingly smooth and rounded with no excessive acidity. Unusual aromas of dried grass and faded rose that emerged during the partially-destalked maceration enhance the more classical nose of red berries, which is still very present.



### Photograph Le Clos Blanc!

Following on from this photograph, we are launching a major photography competition on the theme: **Le Clos Blanc around the world**. So pick up your cameras and show us your vision of our monopole Vougeot Premier Cru le Clos Blanc de Vougeot. Pictures must be taken in an easily-recognizable city or landscape. Give them a title and send your efforts to us at: [vougeraie@domainedelavougeraie.com](mailto:vougeraie@domainedelavougeraie.com) with your contact details. Entry is open to everybody and the competition closes on 12 December 2009.

The results will be unveiled in January 2010 with some prestigious prizes for the winners whose photographs will be on show.

**For the whites**, the still ongoing alcoholic fermentation allows us to be less precise, but underneath the fresh taste one can detect a fleshiness and an impressive presence, with expansive fruity aromas of pear, lemon and floral notes.

Despite it being still early days, **2009** is already an exceptional vintage with great wines both red and white; the results of Mother Nature's generosity and gentle handling from vine to vinification. A style that is somewhat reminiscent of the excellent 1949 and 1959 vintages, for those who are privileged enough to have sampled them. One rediscovers that purity of the days before chemistry that biodynamic cultivation so successfully achieves, drawing both strength and delicacy from the elemental forces. These are most definitely wines with great keeping potential in both colors.

DOMAINE DE LA VOUGERAIE – 7 bis, rue de l'Église – 21700 PREMEAUX-PRISSEY

FRANCE – [www.domainedelavougeraie.com](http://www.domainedelavougeraie.com)

TEL : (33) 3 80 62 48 25 – FAX : (33) 3 80 61 25 44

[vougeraie@domainedelavougeraie.com](mailto:vougeraie@domainedelavougeraie.com)



# La lettre

du DOMAINE DE LA VOUGERAIE

N°29. THE 2009 HARVEST 2009



## THE SPIRIT OF WINE

2009, an exceptional vintage!

A glorious Indian summer has staved off the arrival of the fall, causing an explosion of coppery orange and flaming red across the vines as if in celebration of the 2009 vintage, which we have no doubt can already be qualified as “exceptional”. We have had a magnificent season with great flowering, resulting in perfectly-balanced grapes bursting with health and offering wonderful *millerandage*. The dream-like weather conditions meant good quantities at long last, followed by perfect vinification with dense color and expansive aromas. This year has been extremely generous and after three tricky vintages, we are absolutely delighted.

As devatting comes to an end and the wine embarks upon its next voyage to maturity, here is a recap of the high points of how this young vintage so full of promise came to fruition. It is almost as if nature and the heavens mysteriously united in passionate celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Domaine de la Vougeraie.

*The Boisset Family and the Domaine de la Vougeraie team.*

## WINE OF SEASON



*Gevrey-Chambertin*  
LA JUSTICE 2002

A dense, sparkling ruby color. Wild notes developing, undergrowth. Aromas of macerated black cherries. Wonderful depth on the tongue. The perfect accompaniment to white meats enhanced by fall flavors like morel or other mushroom sauces.



*Beaune*  
PREMIER CRU  
LES GRÈVES 2003

Very intense color. Has retained its sophisticated and elegant style. Extremely powerful. Offers volume in the mouth with clear and mellow tannins. Delicious with strong cheeses such as Epoisses, or game in sauce.



*Vougeot*  
PREMIER CRU  
LE CLOS BLANC DE VOUGEOT  
2004 MONOPOLE

A dazzling yellow gold color. A touch of iodine or even truffle on the nose. Very dense on the tongue, fine oakiness and complexity. Rich with very long aromatic persistence. Final notes of hazelnut and toasted bread. Ideal with fine fish, scallops, Citeaux cheese, foie gras...

- ◆ PURE WHITES,  
STRAIGHT INTO THE BARREL
- ◆ FROM HARVEST  
TO BARREL  
A LUNAR CYCLE, SEARCHING  
FOR PERFECTION
- ◆ (R)EVOLUTION IN  
VINIFYING THE REDS:  
CUVÉES MAINLY COMPRISING  
WHOLE BUNCHES
- ◆ 2009, AN ALREADY  
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resumé



## FROM HARVEST TO BARREL

## A LUNAR CYCLE, SEARCHING FOR PERFECTION



The harvests began on 8 September, under the auspices of two very powerful signs: A “fruit” day in the lunar calendar to enhance the delicious taste of the wine and a **waning moon** to concentrate the aromas. The 12 days of the vendanges went at a hellish pace because there was very little sorting required – from between 0-11% - which meant for some exceptional quantities, but ultimately a very reasonable yield of around 40 hl/ha.

The Clos Blanc was the first plot to be harvested. The hunt for optimum maturity was the challenge this year. We had to be absolutely precise down to the very smallest detail since everything was ripe at the same time thanks to the wonderful and regular flowering of the vines earlier on in the year. With an average potential alcohol of between 12.5 and 13° for the whites and 13° for the reds, it was a **quest for balance** which determined the harvest date for each of the Domaine’s 67 plots. We had to work fast in order to preserve both the sugar and acidity, and not wait too long to avoid overmaturity and sweet, heavy wines.

Most of the whites were put in the barrel without settling; a sign of their unfailing purity (see box).

This exceptional maturity allowed us to carry out **partial destalking for one third of the red cuvées**. Moreover, for the destalked berries, we used our new destalking machine which is even more gentle and better preserves the integrity of the grapes. This new approach explains the intense colors in the juice right from the start of the cold pre-fermentation maceration (six days for the first juice). Sunny days and chilly nights offered ideal conditions for the grapes which came into the winery cold and thus took their time to start fermenting. For the first time, we **bled** twice to further concentrate these generous wines.



The indigenous yeasts, present in greater numbers thanks to such healthy grapes, were working doubly hard and led to some very active fermentation lasting an average of three days. For the first time, none of the fermentations came to a halt – another sign of quality. We then carried out pigeages, sometimes with the feet, to push down the very compact caps of skins and pips, followed by pumpings over once or twice a day until the end of the maceration.



The critical moment when the wine’s style is defined is the **hot post-fermentation** period when the wines reach 30°C. This year, it lasted a long time; over three weeks. It is during this stage that the wine acquires all of its complex nuances, enhanced by the quality of the grapes. Because they were perfectly mature when harvested, the abundant tannins were able to polymerize, combining with other molecules to result in exceptionally velvety wines.

When it came to pressing using the vertical press, one could still discern whole bunches in the marc. Normally, free-run juice accounts for 90% of the cuvée, and of the remaining 10% of vin de presse, half is discarded. But this year, the quality was so good and macerations so successful that 98% of the juice was free-run and the remaining 2% pressed juice was of such high quality that we simply added it to the free-run and left it to settle for two or three days to remove the biggest of the lees before being put in the barrel; a task which should be completed by the end of October.

A few cuvées surprised us with exceptional yields, such as the sunshine-filled Vougeot Premier Cru Les Cras, with 25 barrels compared with 11 last year, and the amazing Savigny-Lès-Beaune Premier Cru Les Marconnets, with 40 barrels compared to 17. The fact that flowering was very good and encouraged very healthy fruits requiring little discard gave more volume compared to other years, but yields were still at the low end of Burgundy averages.

One may recall that in 2008, we discarded one third of the harvest in our quest for absolute quality.

In terms of ageing, the impressive structure of this year’s wines has allowed us to increase the proportion of new barrels for the villages and premier crus by 5-10%, depending on the appellations.

This year, Pierre set himself a target to follow the 28-day **lunar rhythm** for as many cuvées as possible. His mission has been accomplished because the most prestigious terroirs have indeed been able to profit from this natural cycle. Harvested on a “root” day, they were also devatted on a “root” day. Working according to the phases of the moon is a more natural way of nurturing the young wine. For two months, the winery was like a hive of activity as each of the eight members of the team set about their work with calm determination. There was no great music and little singing, rather a background buzz to accompany all the painstaking tasks to create these hand-stitched cuvées, which each person is devoted to making the very best.

### *Pure whites, straight into the barrel*

*One of the characteristics of the whites this year is their color, with bunches as golden as one could wish for, their sparkling maturity clear to the naked eye. The whites demonstrated a lot of millerandage too, even if Chardonnay berries are bigger than their Pinot Noir counterparts.*

*The quality of the must was so fine that the whites hardly needed clarifying – a rarity indeed. Only the two first pressings of the Clos Blanc had to be left to settle, and this only took six hours compared to between the usual 12-24. This is another unmistakable sign of quality. Some extremely promising freshly-pressed cloudy juices with a touch of tannin thanks to the crushed skins were put into stainless-steel vats where the heaviest and least desirable lees were left to fall to the bottom. The resulting naturally clarified juice was put into barrels five days later, just as fermentation began.*

*For the other pressings of white – eight in total – the juice was so fine, with just a subtle gain in maturity, that we simply waited for fermentation to begin to put them into barrels complete with their fine lees. This natural clarity was confirmed in testing. The wines will be a full and direct expression of the terroir.*

*In the cave, cellarman Jean-Luc has been following the rhythm imposed by a huge influx of juice and has been in constant preparation mode: The barrels must be soaked for 24 hours before being filled, they must be carefully aligned and the juice must be aerated before going into the cask to accelerate the fermentation process. The place is filling up at a phenomenal pace. Two vintages now lie there side-by-side, one just stopping bubbling and the other just perfecting itself, although it is already being tasted to much delight. These are two very different expressions of Burgundy and two very powerful personalities, but they certainly share a great heritage.*

