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THE ULTIMATE BURGUNDY REFERENCE

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Statement of Principles

It is important that readers understand how I collect and evaluate the information that is reported in the pages of **Burghound.com** (the tasting notes and information are the sole responsibility of the author).

- I am personally responsible for all of my business expenses without exception. This includes airfare, hotels and effectively all of my meals. The purpose is as clear as it is simple: No conflicts of interest. *I do not accept nor do I seek any subsidy, in any form, from anybody.*
- Sample bottles are accepted for evaluation and commentary, much as book reviewers accept advance copies of new releases. I insist, however, that these sample bottles represent the final wines to be sold under that particular label.
- Finished, bottled wines are assigned scores as these wines are market-ready. Wines tasted from barrel, however, are scored within a range. This reflects the reality that a wine tasted from barrel is not a finished product.
- Wines are evaluated within the context of their *appellations*. Simply put, that means I expect a *grand cru* Burgundy to reflect its exalted status.

While the concept of *terroir* remains a controversial issue in the opinion of many people, it is not controversial to the Burgundian mindset—or to me, either. I attempt to convey, where appropriate, how certain wines are particularly good, or particularly bad, at expressing their underlying *terroir*. This is admittedly a difficult thing, rightly open to discussion among the Burgundians themselves, never mind an outside observer such as myself. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to great Burgundy. Mere "hedonism" is just that: empty pleasure seeking. Burgundy can deliver so much more—if it is asked.

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A Brief Word About Scores:

Numerical scores are endlessly debated among wine lovers. Inevitably, critics tend to emphasize certain characteristics at the expense of others. What follows is an explication of scores at **Burghound.com** and the underlying taste values they reflect.

Simply put, Burgundies that emphasize purity, elegance, overall balance and a clear expression of the underlying *terroir* are rated more highly than Burgundies that don't deliver these qualities. Other important characteristics include typicity, richness, balanced extraction, length and harmony. For example, a Volnay should taste like a Volnay and a *grand cru* should deliver a *grand cru* drinking experience.

The score is a summation of the taster's thoughts about a wine. It does not actually express those thoughts. Clearly, a mere number cannot fully represent the nuanced, detailed impression conveyed by a tasting note.

Please note: Wines are scored based on their expected quality at peak drinkability. Many *grands crus* that will, I believe, "be" a 92 may not necessarily taste like a 92-point wine when young, thanks to the tannins or general inaccessibility.

Wines rated 90 points or above are worth a special effort to find and cellar. Wines rated 85 or above are recommended, **especially among regional and villages level wines**. There will be relatively few 90+ point wines, simply because there are relatively few outstanding and superlative wines. Finished, bottled wines are assigned specific scores as these wines are market-ready. Wines tasted from barrel are scored within a range. This reflects the reality that a wine tasted from barrel is not a finished, market-ready product.

95 – 100:	Truly incomparable and emotionally thrilling. A wine so rated is as good as a wine gets. By definition, it is reference standard for its <i>appellation</i> .
90 – 94:	Outstanding. Worth a special effort to purchase and cellar and will provide memorable drinking experiences.
85 – 89:	Good to High quality. Wines that offer solid quality in every respect and generally very good typicity. "Good Value" wines will often fall into this category. Worth your attention.
80 – 84:	Average to Good quality. The wine is "correct", displays no noticeable flaws and will provide pleasing, if straightforward, drinking.
76 – 79:	Barely Acceptable quality. The wine is not worth your attention nor is it a good value.
75 and Below:	Don't Bother. A wine with noticeable, irremediable flaws.

Estimated Maturities:

Estimating a window of when any given Burgundy will be at its peak is an extremely difficult thing to do with precision. The time frames that you see after the score is my best estimate as to when any given wine will likely be at its best. This is of course simply an educated guess about how the wine will evolve and assumes that the wine will have been responsibly shipped and stored, which as long-time collectors know is not always the case. Just as importantly, the time suggested windows are based on how I personally prefer my Burgundies. This effectively means that for reds, there is still obvious freshness and vibrancy remaining to both the fruit and the flavors and while the tannic structure will be largely resolved, it by no means suggests that a completely smooth palate will exist devoid of any firmness. Especially tannic and or concentrated wines will necessarily have wider windows for obvious reasons. For whites, the windows are designed to indicate that point at which youthful fruit has passed into secondary nuances with more fully developed complexity as well as when the textures have rounded out and the sometimes pointed acidity has mellowed. Important note: what the estimated maturities do NOT suggest is how long a wine will remain structurally sound and still capable of providing some enjoyment as many Burgundies are capable of remarkably long periods of graceful decline; however, beyond a certain point they will have passed their peaks and should be drunk, no matter how intellectually interesting they may be. As with anything this subjective, there is no substitute for your own experience and I offer these estimated maturities as a general guideline, not gospel and as the saying goes, your mileage may vary.

The 201 Producers Reviewed in This Issue

Chablis:

Azo, Hervé
Bessin, Jean-Claude
Billaud, Samuel
Billaud-Simon
Brocard, Jean-Marc
Chablisiënne, La
Chenevrières, des
Damp, Daniel
Damp, Sébastien
Damp, Vincent
Dauvissat, Jean et Sébastien
Dauvissat, Vincent
Defaix et Fils, Bernard
Droin, Jean-Paul et Benoit
Drouhin, Joseph
Durup, Jean/Château de Maligny
Ellevin
Fèvre, William
Goisot, Guillem et Jean-Hugues
Grossot, Jean-Pierre
Laroche
Long-Depaquit
Malandes, des
Michel, Louis
Moreau Père et Fils, Christian
Moreau-Naudet
Picq, Gilbert
Pinson Frères
Piuze, Patrick
Pommier, Denis
Raveneau, François
Servin
Simonnet-Fèbvre
Temps Perdus, les
Tribut, Laurent
Villiers, Elise

Mâconnais:

Barraud, Daniel
Chalet Pouilly, du
Cordier, Christophe
Cordier, Roger
Ferret, J. A.
Folie, de la
Fuissé, Château de
Garenne, de la
Guffens-Heynen
Lafon, Héritiers des Comtes
Lavernette, Château de
Manciat-Poncet

Rijckaert, Jean
Robert-Denogent
Rontets, Château de
Saumaize-Michelin
Soufrandièrre, La/Bret Brothers
Thibert Père et Fils
Verget

Côte Chalonnaise:

Cellier Aux Moines, du
Chamirey, Château de
Cognard, Laurent
Dureuil-Janthial, Vincent
Ferté, de la
Jaeger-Defaix
Joblot
Juillot, Michel
Meix-Foulot, du
Villaine, A. & P. de

California Pinot Noir:

Alma Rosa
Alta Maria Vineyards
Alysian Wines
Ampelos Cellars
Arista Wines
Babcock Winery and Vineyards
Baileyana Winery
Bennett Valley Cellars
Benovia Winery
Black Kite
Bluxome Street Winery
Bohème Wines
Bonaccorsi Wine Company
BR Cohn
Brewer Clifton
Bruliam Wines
Byron Estate Winery
Calera Wine Company
Cameron Hughes
Center of Effort Wines
Clos Pepe Estate
Clouds Rest Vineyards
Cobb Vineyards
Cru Wine Company
Cutruzzola Vineyards
Davis Bynum
Dehlinger Winery
Deovlet Wines
Dragonette Cellars
Dutton-Goldfield Winery

Easton
Evening Land Vineyards
Fess Parker
Flying Goat Cellars
Fog Crest Vineyard
Foxen Winery and Vineyard
Frank Family Vineyards
Fulcrum Wines
Furthermore Wines
Gainey Vineyard
Goldeneye Winery
Grey Stack Cellars
JCB
Kenneth Volk Vineyards
Kosta Browne Winery
La Crema Winery
La Fenêtre
Longoria Wines
MacPhail Family Wines
Melville Vineyards and Winery
Montpellier Vineyards
Morgan Winery
Nagy Wines
Native⁹
Ojai Vineyard, The
Paul Lato Wines
Picket Fence
Presqu'île Winery
Radio-Côteau Vineyards
Rarus Cellars
Rivers-Marie Wines
Robert Stemmler Winery
Rodney Strong Vineyards
Rusack Vineyards
Saintsbury
Sandhi Wines
Sanguis Wines
Solomon Hills Vineyard
Sonoma-Loeb
Spell Winery
Storm Wines
Talisman Wines
Talley Vineyards
The Hilt
Thomas Fogarty Winery
T. R. Elliott
Tyler Winery
VML Wines
Windy Oaks Estate

Oregon Pinot Noir:

Bergström Wines
Brick House Wine Co.
Brooks Wines
Chehalem

Cooper Mountain Vineyards
Dion Vineyard
Evening Land Vineyards
J. K. Carriere Wines
Purple Hands
Roco Winery
St. Innocent Winery
Soter Vineyards
Tendril Wine Cellars
Torii Mor Vineyards & Winery
Trisaetum Winery
Tye Wine Cellars
Walnut City WineWorks
Walter Scott Wines
White Rose Estate
WillaKenzie Estate

En Plus - Champagne:

Ayala
Bollinger
Bruno Paillard, Champagne
Charles Ellner
Delamotte
Diebolt-Vallois
Gonet-Médeville
Jacquesson
J. Lassalle
Lallier
Paul Bara
Pierre Moncuit
Pol Roger
Saint-Chamant
S. Coquille, Champagne
Veuve Fourny et Fils

En Plus:

Amiot, Guy et Thierry
Butterfield, David
Capitain-Gagnerot
Chartron et Trebuchet
Decelle-Villa
Evening Land Vineyards
Giboulot, Emmanuel
Glantenay, Bernard et Thierry
Heart & Hands Wine Company
Jadot
Langoureau, Sylvain
Magnien, Stéphane
Marchand, Denis
Marchand Frères
Moillard
Moulin-à-Vent, Château du
Perdrix, des
Prieuré, du

“Tasted without Commentary”: For U.S. pinot samples submitted for review that have *not* been specifically solicited that obtain a score of 86 or below, while those wines will be tasted and reviewed, we may choose to not provide a narrative/commentary, however the wines will be listed and included in the database so readers know they have been reviewed. The majority, though not all, of the US pinots were tasted in the home office.

Note: Wines receiving a ➤ symbol are particularly outstanding for their respective *appellations* and especially merit your attention; readers should note that *grands crus* stand on their own.

Book Review:

“The Finest Wines of Burgundy – A guide to the Best Producers of the Côte d’Or and Their Wines”, by Bill Nanson, University of California Press, www.ucpress.edu, Copyright © 2012 by Fine Wine Editions Ltd. Burgundy enthusiast Bill Nanson has done some really fine work in penning a highly personal and insightful take on his favorite producers in the Côte d’Or. Supporting his work is an admirably brief forward by the illustrious Hugh Johnson and some positively stunning photography from Jon Wyand; indeed I am not exaggerating when I say that Wyand’s portrait work of Burgundian producers is among the best that I have ever seen. The production values of this “firm” paperback are also excellent and Fine Wine Editions is to be commended for not cutting the usual corners. I speak from personal experience when I observe that maintaining good production values is not cheap but they make the reading experience so much better that they are worth the expense.

As to the information content I generally like Nanson’s take on what is relevant to know about each of his choices. There is a good balance between each domaine’s history, the current personalities, vineyard holdings, wine styles and just enough technical information to present something of interest, and benefit, for almost every reader. Intensely personal wine books, such as this one, too often descend into the banal or conversely, excessively glowing testimonials about the author’s relationship with such and such a proprietor. In this case, while Nanson’s affection for the producers is evident, he admirably avoids undue emphasis on trying to persuade the reader that he’s a privileged insider. As such the producer profiles are presented without affectation and in most cases Nanson does a fine job of balancing off the competing needs for reasonable concision with that of providing his readers with the necessary information. As such there is sufficient detail that everyone, regardless of level, will learn something. I also like Nanson’s background information about various topics such as geology, history, viticulture, vinification and how to serve, collect, cellar and enjoy Burgundy because it’s reasonably comprehensive and the writing style is crisp. The introductions to each village are also well done as they present just enough information to be useful but not so much that it becomes laborious. There are also some highly subjective takes on the 10 best in a variety of categories such as 10 best Côte de Nuits *grands crus* and the producers of same, the 10 best winemakers, the 10 best Côte de Beaune *premiers crus* and so forth, which is indisputably entertaining if concomitantly providing much food for spirited debate!

A few other observations are warranted. The title promises to present the “best” producers and on the whole Nanson has accomplished this though there are some notable omissions. I hold him harmless in this regard as The Finest Wines of Burgundy is after all a personal selection. And in fairness he does admit that space limitations did not permit the inclusion of every domaine that might have merited it. Moreover, and this is very much to Nanson’s credit, he does not limit his profiles to only the “rich and famous” but also to the “little known but deserving”. To my sensibilities this alone distinguishes Nanson’s work from the vast majority of authors who rarely ever venture from the tried and true but tired track of Burgundy books.

There are also a few nits. The first is that Finest Wines would be just the right size to pop in your suitcase if you were planning to visit Burgundy except for one glaring omission: no maps at the vineyard level. To be fair, the book’s size would have required either impossibly small maps or fold outs, which I understand can easily be damaged. Still, any book that purports to be a travel companion and guide should have made some accommodation in this regard. Secondly there are some mistakes and while none of them are really serious, they do detract somewhat from the overall appeal of Finest Wines. I certainly do not wish to be hypocritical as I can, once again, speak from first-hand knowledge that it is almost impossible to be 100% accurate and indeed I have never yet read a book on Burgundy that didn’t have a few mistakes, whether through ignorance or just the inevitable typographical errors.

These shortcomings aside however, Finest Wines is a quality piece of work, not only because of Nanson’s engaging yet measured enthusiasm and clear writing style but also because the book is well laid out and visually appealing. I heartily recommend that you pick up a copy. I guarantee that you will find much to like about it.

New Film on Burgundy:

Noted producer David Kennard and the well-known American importer Martine Saunier have teamed up to produce a lovely documentary entitled **A Year In Burgundy** (“Year”). The “docu-love” film chronicles the activities of several of Saunier’s producer clients through each of four seasons during 2011. Kennard narrates and Saunier asks pertinent questions of her

growers as they demonstrate such things as fall and spring pruning, canopy and yield management, preparations for the harvest and making the wine. The film is conveniently subtitled for English speakers. The cinematography is often strikingly beautiful and there are some genuinely breathtaking shots.

Both Kennard and Saunier are perfectly suited for their respective roles. Anyone who is familiar with the superb series Connections starring David Burke will know just how good Kennard's work can be. Similarly, Saunier is a competent and sure-handed guide, having been instructed in the finer point of Burgundian lore by none other than legends Henri Jayer and Lalou-Bize Leroy; Mme Bize, by the way, appears in the film. Other producers also appearing, all of which are clients of Saunier, include domaines Perrot-Minot, Morey-Coffinet, Bruno Clavelier, Denis Mortet and Michel Gay in the Côte d'Or and Dominique Cornin in the Mâconnais.

While there are plenty of reflective moments in Year that the sheer weight of history and tradition invariably impose upon any serious work on Burgundy, there are also a number of lighter scenes surrounding the harvest and associated festivities. And in one completely unscripted moment that would have made none other than Inspector Jacques Clouseau of Pink Panther fame proud, the *gendarmes* (French police) arrive at what can only be described as the most inopportune moment possible much to the consternation of one of the producers rushing to get his grapes picked!

As of this writing, Year will not be released in theaters but rather on DVD. It may also be shown on such networks as PBS and the BBC among other possibilities. Readers who may be interested in more details can find them here: <http://www.ayearinburgundy.com>

I thoroughly enjoyed Year and recommend it to you.