



birds or bugs – are these ladys important?

Timeline: Vintage 2004

- August 2004 – in many villages the grapes look terrible – particularly in parts of Côte de Beaune where they have recently been hailed to add to the botrytis.
- Last days of September 2004 – harvesting. It's hard work to triage, but the recent quite good weather means there is actually something to harvest - once you cut the rot out of often mushy clusters. Still it's much better than was expect in August!
- July-Dec 05 – actually the wines taste surprisingly good; modest tannins but silky and sweet – at that time more interesting than most of the 2003s it seemed
- July 06 onwards – what's that smell?
- January 07 - [the greeny-red wines of 2004](#)



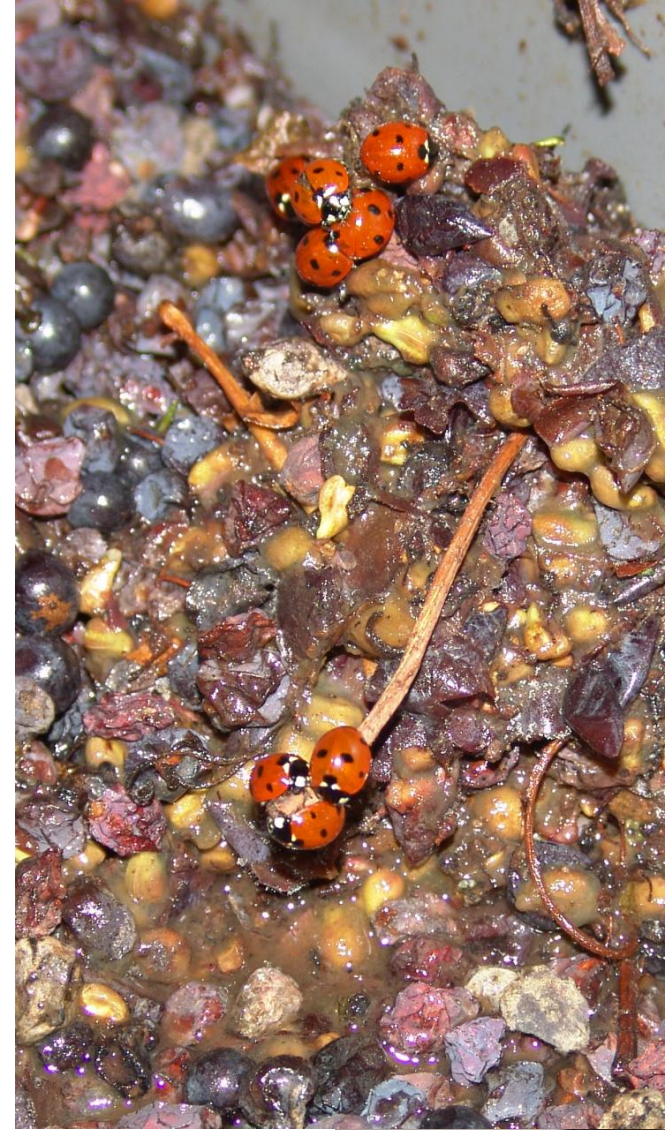
Timeline Vintage 2004

- Oct 2008 - I'd, by now, estimated that a least 30% of bottles had '*that aromatic profile*', elevated levels of which also affected the taste. I assumed (let's call it for now...) the 'taint' was a phase which would hopefully subside, an '2004 lunch' with fellow enthusiasts left me questioning that perspective.
- Nov 2008 - I mentioned my experience of grape-baskets often with dozens of ladybirds (ladybugs or coccinella depending on your bent) at harvest-time, Don Cornwell, on erobertparker suggested a potential research link – [pyrazines](#). Seemingly this was experienced also in Canada
- Dec 2008 - [2004 à la coccinelle](#) – the first article on the subject



Vintage 2004

- During the 2004 harvest I'd had no reason to consider taking dozens of images of the little beetles that were on our triage tables, in our waste bins, and in the cap of the fermentation tanks – I assumed it was completely normal. Fortunately one or two badly focused images made it through...



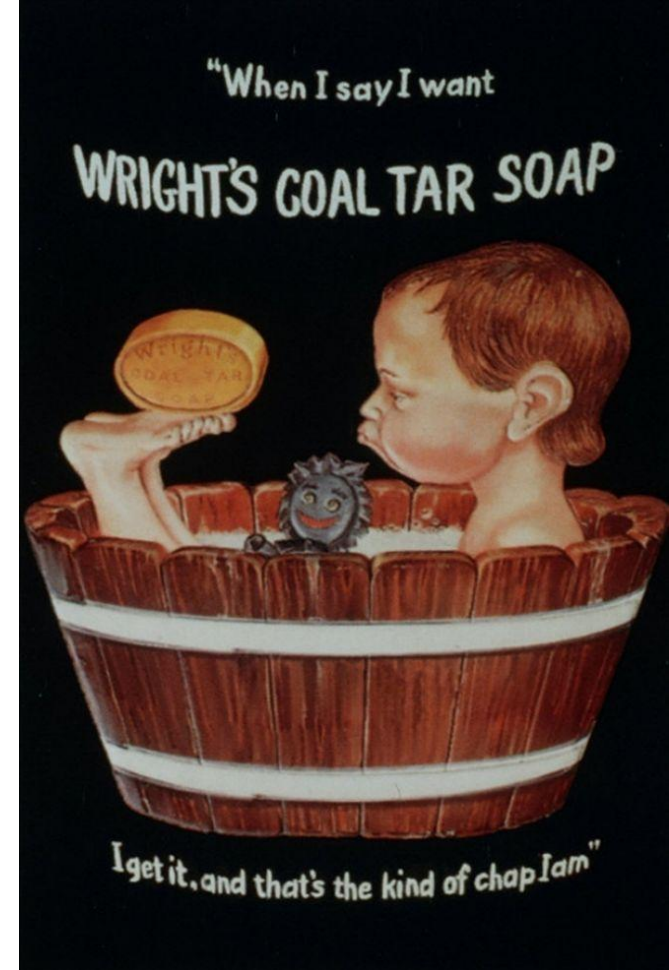
Récolte
2004

The odour – what was/is it?

- It is very specific, and is not any of the usual suspects:
 - It is not the smell of rot
 - It is not a herbal unripeness
 - It is not the smell of stems
- If not that, then what?
 - My early descriptors were cedar or Wrights Coal Tar soap!
 - Others say Mirepoix
 - French tasters often say Gentian (now)
- There are many descriptors associated with 'green' but none adequately fit – the internet 'shorthand' for this 'taint' is now 'green meenies' but we should note
 - 2004s are ripe from a sugar standpoint – almost no chaptalising was necessary in this vintage
 - Phenolic ripeness can be questioned, but that's the case in most vintages, this is different and let's not forget the '*lack of*' tannin

The odour – what was/is it?

- Discussing with more technically-minded winemakers, all said it was '*pyrazine like*', but:
 - Wines tasted from barrel showed virtually nothing like this
 - Towards the end of the élevage some cuvées exhibited the note but on a mild level
 - Different wines from the same cellar – so same viticulture, ripeness and vinification – some showed it and others not
 - Gradually, 3 months to 3+ years after bottling, most wines showed it to a certain extent



A complication - not everyone smells it!

- Discussing this can be a real can of worms
 - Person A says wine 1 is clean
 - Person B says wine 1 is mildly tainted
 - Person C 'DNPIM' !! (do not put in mouth!)
- Which producers are affected seems to be a matter of personal sensitivity – though obviously affected whites are rarer, potentially for various reasons
 - A single press
 - All juice settles and (mainly) 'solids' free
 - Alcoholic fermentation of clean juice, at cool temperatures, so no grapes, no dead or dying beetles...

And that was that (or was it?)

- My correlations and literature searches showed some empirical connection between the unusual infestation of coccinelle during the 2004 Côte d'Or harvest.
- About 50% of vignerons that I discussed this with agreed that this was probably the root cause.
- Equally many thought it nonsense
- The wines had sold and the 2005, 2006 & 2007 were of far more importance to the 'selling machine' – so it wasn't likely that anyone would test anything in the lab
- It was the 'end of story'
- But then came 2011...

Rogues gallery 2011 - Beaune



Rogues gallery 2011 - Morey



Rogues gallery 2011 - Meursault



Rogues gallery 2011 - Savigny



Rogues gallery 2011 - Gevrey

