

Sarah Marsh MW 2010 Vintage Report

Quite often there is a divide between the Côte de Beaune and the Côte de Nuits. This year Volnay is one of my favorite villages. I prefer them to the 2009. Beaune also performed very well and I prefer the wines in 2010 to 2009. Generally the 2010 emphasizes the Côte de Beaune style and the balance is so attractive. The fruit is fresher (while sumptuous in 2009 it could verge on the slightly baked in warmer spots) and the terroir distinction is more precise in the young wines. This is not true everywhere though, for example Pommard is more divided.

Super Volnay expression in 2010. It's a village high light for me this year. It's ripe, fresh and full of vitality. It's a very good year for Volnay. Not only is the fruit gorgeous, but it is lively and has a refined, delicate but intense quality. It is not as ripe as the 2009 (with less alcohol and better balance). The long cool season has given the fruit a lucid quality and plenty of juicy acidity. The tannins range from thick and velvety to fine and airy, but they should be supremely supple. I do think the good Volnays this year are the best I have tasted since 2005.

A summary of the conditions:

A cold winter snap (minus 20 degrees on the 19th December) resulted in a loss of approximately 5% vines. This is evident in the lower lying land along the route 74 where the frost hit hardest. Poor weather disrupted the flowering. The fruit set was poor. There was a lot of millerandage. Small bunches and small berries resulted in very low yields.

Details of the weather over the summer can be found in the vintage report for the white wines, suffice to say here that the summer was pretty cool and rainy. The temperature was only marginally below average though and the rain only a little above average. There was some sun in June, interrupted by brief heavy rain. Part of July and August was quite wet. The hail affected reds in the south of the Côte de Beaune.

Analysis

The long season helped too by allowing for long slow maturity, which gave good ripeness and texture to the tannins, plenty of concentration and good acidity. The malic was not burnt off and there was also good tartaric. The low crop meant the grapes were concentrated and full of phenolic components. Small berries can lead to excessive tannins, but not in this vintage.

Where the sugar levels were quite high, at the upper end of the 12-13.8 ballpark for this vintage, the wines do not seem out of balance. They have plenty of matter and a lot of acidity.

I tasted [the Domaine Clos de la Chapelle wines, along with the Champy wines] with Champy director Pierre Meurgey and Dimitri Bazas the winemaker.

Dimitri: "The key element for the reds was the very low crop so the grapes were concentrated, full of phenolic components and dense. They were very easy and quick to harvest and there was good weather during the harvest. It was not as hot as for the 2011 harvest. We started on September 21st in Volnay so the weather not too warm."

"We had a healthy crop. The triage was small - just 5% - so when we de-stem, we took out approximately the weight of the stems, except the vineyards, which were recently converted to organic viticulture; these needed more sorting.... There is also minerality and tension, which we find more in the organic grapes, juice and wine. We feel they have more energy, even if the analysis is not that different." The malic represented about half the TA at harvest. "We had to be careful to catch the moment of ripeness and not over-ripe. In 2011 it was different for the season was quick and the malic burnt off, but the 2010 the season was slow and it remained high."

Pierre: "Like 2002 but with more concentration...less acidity than in 2002.... The fermentation and maceration were easy to manage as it was not too hot and the fruit was acidic enough." ... "It is easy for the winemaker when we have the acidity...so you do not have to do specific extraction methods. The yields low for everybody. ... It will be more concentrated than 2009 and more drinkable than the 2008. 2010 will confirm a good continuity in Burgundy from 2008, 2009, but 2010 will be above this."

"Classic vintage, not the most singing at the moment, but such a good potential. The top cuvees of 2010 will be better than 2009. They do not have the approachability of the 2009, but have the long term potential. We see the same difference in the two vintages as with the whites, but it will take longer.... for wine collectors the 2010 is not a vintage to be missed at the top end. This is a small crop...the 2008 are starting to show now and in red the 2010 are far superior to the 2008. The tannins are better in 2010, coated in the flesh in the vintage..."

"Worth keeping them, although in the short term they will be nicer than the 2008, if you want to open quicker..." "Marked by ripe concentration" says Dimitri, "almost like 2005, but the 2005 has more tannins and acidity." Pierre considers we must go back to great vintages of the old days when the harvest was typically later and the cycle of the vineyards was more normal. This also gave the colder temperature during the harvest, "this makes the difference...we get the full picture of the wine - ripe tannins and we have the final soft ripeness from the longer ripening. In 2005 it was a little shorter....so we have more angles in the 2005. 2010 and 2005 on the same quality level. For the top cuvee the 2010s will be better in the long term than 2009. " However he points out that he is not speaking about the entry level wines.... "2009 has a more homogenous quality. If we had to buy in all the wine for 2010 it would have been more difficult."