

Bruce Sanderson Decanted

2014 Burgundy Tastings: A Pedestrian in Beaune

Easing into the week with some Côte de Beaunes from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle and Laleure-Piot



Photo by: Bruce Sanderson


The Clos de la Chapelle monopole in Volnay yielded potentially outstanding Pinot Noir in 2014.

Bruce Sanderson

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Senior editor Bruce Sanderson is in Burgundy for a week of tasting more than 300 reds and whites from 2014, some bottled, some in tank ready for bottling, and some from barrel. The vintage presented challenges, but should deliver instant gratification.

My first day in Burgundy presented a tour in the center of Beaune, beginning with Domaine Clos de la Chapelle. American businessman Mark O'Connell, one of the partners, met me at the new tasting room with enologist Dimitri Bazas.

O'Connell compares Burgundy vintages to NBA games: It doesn't matter what happens in the first three quarters; it always comes down to the fourth. In 2014, there were three to four glorious weeks from the end of August into September, allowing the DCC team to harvest the best possible fruit.

That said, 2014 wasn't easy. Hail struck for the third consecutive year in Beaune, Pommard and Volnay, where the bulk of the DCC parcels lie, reducing yields by about half. "I think 2014 was the toughest year for hail in Beaune," says O'Connell. On top of that, once again, the clusters were composed of small berries with thick skins, making yields even lower.

The 2014s here have the lowest acidity since 2009, but according to Bazas, the tannins present in the must consisted of a 60/40 skin-to-seed ratio, making extractions easier. "Normally there is a 50/50 ratio and you have to be careful not to extract bitter tannins [from the seeds]," he explains.

Most of the DCC wines were bottled in November 2015; a few had recently been racked and were in tank for bottling next week (February 12). Tasted non-blind, all of them are potentially outstanding.

The trio from Volnay revealed very different characters. The En Carelle showed pretty floral, strawberry, cherry and a hint of spice flavors along with the elegant, refined and harmonious structure that for many epitomizes Volnay. The Clos de la Chapelle, from higher on the slope and just across the road is a monopoly of the domaine's. It offered darker fruit cherry and black currant, accented by a graphite/iron note. This has an extra dimension, rich and almost creamy in texture, with fine length. The Volnay Taillepieds was racked three weeks ago, so showed slight reduction. As Volnay goes, it's a beast, exhibiting meaty, dark fruit, a brooding, introverted character and, despite being backward, complexity and great potential.

In a 2014 acquisition, DCC gained parcels on the hill of Corton. Perfectly healthy fruit in '14 allowed Bazas to retain 50 percent of the stems in the two reds. The Corton Rognets, already bottled, was aromatic and spicy, displaying meaty, black cherry, fine richness, density and restrained power. The Corton Bressandes was still in tank. Forthcoming aromas of cherry, kirsch, flowers, spice were married to an elegant, firm profile, with mineral on the long finish.

DCC's Corton-Charlemagne was already in bottle. It's made by pressing whole clusters, a technique that O'Connell and Bazas say emphasizes the mineral elements. Lean, with citrus, floral, apple, grapefruit, spice and an undercurrent of stone, it's very refined and long. By contrast, Laleure-Piot's Corton-Charlemagne (picked on the same dates and also made by

Bazas) is destemmed and crushed to emphasize the fruit and spends a few months on the lees in barrel. Honey, ripe apple and spice, flavors spilled over the rich, open, lush texture, yet there was intensity and the length of *grand cru*.

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