



DOMAINE DROUHIN-LAROZE

GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN, FRANCE

Robert Parker
WINE ADVOCATE

Ce que la presse en pense ...

MILLÉSIME 2016

Reviewed by Neal Martin

They've done it! "What have they done, exactly," you rightfully ask. Well, Drouhin-Laroze has finally produced a clutch of wines commensurate with their stellar array of holdings. Without wishing any disrespect to Philippe Drouhin, since first encountering their wines in the late nineties, myself and other mavens felt that they were a bit "over-produced." Maybe picked too late? Certainly they were often burdened with an excessive use of new oak that obfuscated terroir, and when you have half a dozen grand crus under your wing, that is a shame.

When the gauntlet passed to the next generation a couple of years back, daughter Caroline and her brother Nicolas (absent due to a newborn arriving two days earlier) exchanged views on their wines, and I translated what I felt were their shortcomings with candor. I just wanted them to ratchet up the quality. If I recall correctly, I cited their 2014 Latricières-Chambertin as indicative of what they could achieve with a change in approach. Their 2016s bear witness to a different Drouhin-Laroze. Their 2016s are the best that I have tasted out of barrel. The wines are collectively fresher and more tensile without compromising fruit intensity. They were much more terroir-driven. There was far more personality. You want to get to know these wines better. The makeover can be attributed to simple, perhaps obvious tweaking to the formula: less use of new oak since 2014 albeit still higher than some, with the village, premier and grand crus raised in 20%, 40% and 80% new oak, respectively. But that prudence pays dividends. It allows the terroir to "breathe." Secondly, they have altered the toasting of barrels (Rousseau, Billon, Raymond and Seguin Moreau) so that they are now low-toasted plus rather than medium-toasted plus. Thirdly is the introduction of stems, again, since 2014. 2016 marks the first vintage whereby all cuvées include some proportion of whole bunch (see tasting notes for details).

I must confess that in numerous previous visits, as much as I always enjoy chatting away with the ever-delightful Caroline, the two words lingering in my mind were: "If only...." Not this time. This time I waltzed away with a spring in my step, convinced that the domaine is on the cusp of a new chapter. From the Bourgogne Rouge up to their Clos-de-Bèze and a single barrel of the sadly quantity-depleted Musigny, these were wonderful, life-affirming, quite cerebral wines in the making. Given the enviable, glittering array of holdings, trust me, Drouhin-Laroze could rapidly be up there with the very best, alongside the likes of, say, Rousseau or Mortet. Put aside whatever prejudice you might have against the Drouhin-Laroze of the past and take a look at the future.

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The 2016 CHAMBERTIN CLOS DE BÈZE GRAND CRU was made from two cuvées, one destemmed and the other not, so that there is around 30% whole bunch. It has a very well-defined bouquet with outstanding tension and focus. The palate is pure and silky smooth, more red fruit than black, very harmonious with very well-integrated new oak (80%). This is the best that the domaine has ever made. Period. Chapeau Nicolas and Caroline.

96-98

The 2016 MUSIGNY GRAND CRU was reduced to a single barrel because of the frost, instead of the usual two or three. It has a deep and penetrating bouquet with black fruit, blueberry, minerals, crushed rose petals and vanilla absorbed from the new barrel. The palate is medium-bodied with fine grain tannin, great tension here, with a sorbet-fresh finish laced with orange zest and Japanese yuzu. It feels linear at the moment but very focused and with palpable energy that leaves the mouth tingling with glee after the wine has departed. Superb. This is another classy offering from Drouhin-Laroze.

95-97



The 2016 CHAPELLE-CHAMBERTIN Grand Cru includes around 30% whole bunch fruit. It has a very complex bouquet, a mixture of red and black fruit, a whiff of sea cave, wet limestone and something from underground (mulch or peat?). The palate is medium-bodied with very fine tannin, pure black cherry and blueberry fruit with a taut, quite linear but tensile finish. This is outstanding, a very sophisticated Chapelle-Chambertin in the making with breeding and intellect, all without shortchanging you on fruit.

94-96



The 2016 BONNES MARES Grand Cru was perhaps the one grand cru that I felt was a little disjointed and did not quite deliver the vivacity of the Chapelle-Chambertin or Latricières. It includes 40% whole bunch fruit and was depleted by 30% because of the frost, but it just came across a little dolorous at the moment. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin. This feels a little foursquare and conservative and just needs more of the flamboyance and blue fruit you associate with this vineyard. Maybe this Bonnes-Mares just got stage fright on the day I visited?

90-92

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The 2016 CLOS DE VOUGEOT Grand Cru includes 35% whole bunch fruit (the first time ever) and was cropped at just 25 hectoliters per hectare because of frost damage. It has an attractive bouquet with copious dark cherry, blackberry and crushed flowers. The palate is well balanced with fine tannin, quite a masculine Clos Vougeot with a good backbone on the somewhat foursquare finish that just cuts away a little swiftly. This might be one cuvée where I prefer the 2015 to this year's counterpart.

91-93

The 2016 LATRICIERES-CHAMBERTIN Grand Cru, like the Chapelle-Chambertin, includes around 40% whole bunch fruit. This is incredibly pure on the nose, very focused, brimming full of energy. It foregoes the conservatism and reserve one usually discerns on wines from this vineyard. The palate is medium-bodied, with layers of raspberry coulis and crushed strawberry laced with tobacco and a touch of spice, fanning out gloriously but with style on the finish. Again, it is a step up from the 2015.

94-96

They 2016 GEVREY CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU CLOS PRIEUR has a more complex bouquet than the Crapeaux with pure black fruit, bilberry and a touch of cold slate, with the 30% whole bunch lending freshness and delineation. The palate is medium-bodied with fine delineation and a keen line of acidity, very poised with orange zest, Morello cherry and raspberry toward the silky finish. What a superb Clos Prieur—I wager that this will surpass the 2015.

91-93

The 2016 GEVREY CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU LAVAUT SAINT JACQUES includes around 30% whole bunch fruit and 40% new oak. It has a very sophisticated bouquet, cool as a cucumber at first, nonchalant but very harmonious. The palate is medium-bodied with filigreed tannin, wonderful mineralité, feminine and poised with a killer line of acidity. There is a lot of energy contained in this Lavaut, and it is going to be a wonderful wine, the best that the domaine has ever produced (at least in my tasting experience).

93-95

The 2016 GEVREY CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU CRAIPILLOT is matured in around 60% new oak with 30% whole bunches. The nose takes a while to unfurl but eventually reveals expressive redcurrant and cranberry fruit, fine mineralité here. The palate is medium-bodied with very fresh red cherry and crushed strawberry fruit and a fine line of acidity, attenuating slightly toward the finish, but I think that it will flesh out by the time it is in bottle.

90-92

The 2016 CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY Village comes mainly from the premier cru Les Baudes that was not affected by the hail damage. It has a very refined bouquet with impressive delineation and plenty of freshness. There is a subtle marine influence here. The palate is medium-bodied with a sorbet-fresh opening. It is not a deep Chambolle, more linear and strict, prioritizing freshness and tension. This should age very well.

90-92

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The 2016 GEVREY CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU AU CLOSEAU was completely destemmed. It has a very refined bouquet, pure and quite floral with dark cherries, blueberry and minerals, quite detailed and gaining intensity with time. The palate is medium-bodied with juicy tannin, not as complex as the Crepiots, quite succulent and fleshy toward the finish with a hint of hoisin on the aftertaste. Perhaps one of the earlier drinking 2016s from Drouhin-Laroze this year.

88-90

The 2016 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN EN CHAMPS is the second bottling from the vineyard that was, until then, blended into the village cru. The vines here around 60 years old, and this vintage includes 20% whole bunch and around 40% new oak. It has a refined bouquet with red cherries and hints of blue fruit, then touches of damp woodland percolating through over time. The palate is well balanced with a fresh, orange pithing entry, fine tannin with dark berry fruit, bay leaf and a touch of black tea toward the finish. Classy.

90-92

The 2016 GEVREY CHAMBERTIN Village comes from ten parcels and includes 30% whole bunch fruit and, again, around 40% new oak. It has a fragrant and more feminine bouquet than the Morey-Saint-Denis, as you would expect, with touches of rose petal complementing the red berry fruit. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin, fresh in the mouth with a lot of finesse on the finish. This is another superb village cru from Drouhin-Laroze.

89-91

The 2016 MOREY-SAINT-DENIS Village is raised in 40% new oak and there are four barrels, so I'll let you do the math. It has a clean and focused bouquet: dark berry fruit, touches of pressed flowers emerging with time. The palate is very fresh on the entry, quite succulent and lively with hints of blood orange and cinnamon toward the energetic finish. This is a very well-crafted village cru from Drouhin-Laroze.

89-91



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The 2016 FIXIN Villages is matured in 40% new oak. It had a slightly leafy, restrained bouquet although the oak is neatly integrated. The palate is medium-bodied with fresh, crisp tannins, supple in the mouth with a clean, mint-tinged finish. Delightful.

88-90

The 2016 BOURGOGNE ROUGE comes from vines in Chambolle-Musigny and Morey-Saint-Denis and is matured in 20% new oak. There is plenty of brambly red berry fruit on the nose. The palate is medium-bodied with crisp tannin, those dark fruits continuing with just a slightly curt finish.

85

The 2016 BOURGOGNE

CHARDONNAY is matured in 20% new oak. It comes from two parcels between Brochon and Fixin. It has quite a primal nose with strangely some red fruit scents, then later quince and orange blossom. The palate is well balanced, primal with orange zest and pear toward the finish but it just lacks the race and tension that I expect even at this generic level.

84

