

### Burgundy 2013 Vintage View

I start off my vintage review with a quote from the wine critic I both absolutely trust and greatly enjoy reading and I do this because the start of my summary below will probably make you assume that 2013 is a vintage to pass on, but that is simply not the case.

The poor chaps in Burgundy have been on the set of a disaster movie for the last 4 years. Every article I have read and most conversations I have had in the last few years have revolved around inclement weather, hail storms and reduced yields, but they are a resilient bunch in Burgundy, they keep being knocked down by Mother Nature, but refuse to lay on the canvas for long.

**“For sure, 2013 was a tumultuous, challenging vintage for the Côte d’Or. They endured deep lows and times of despair but in the end, against all expectations, they’ve ended up on a high. It is no surprise that from their point of view, 2013 is an incredibly emotional vintage. The worried, fretted, toiled, labored, struggled and fought for these wines and in the main part, clutched victory from the hands of defeat. If I scored wines on effort, there would be a slew of perfect scores.”**

Neal Martin December 2014, [www.eRobertParker.com](http://www.eRobertParker.com)

So what of 2013? Clearly the weather is the talking point, but I appreciate it is of little relevance to most consumers; what’s in the glass is the key, but I think in a vintage like 2013 it’s important to be able to appreciate how awkward the growing season was and how much work had to be put in in order to make some surprisingly impressive wines. I always feel a wine tastes better when you know the effort and love put into it. Hence, much of the wine I drink is often from the ‘lesser’ vintages or from the friendliest, most charming producers. It’s just so much more satisfying!

It all started with a cold snap at the start of the year, no bad thing as this kills off any bugs from the previous season and gives the vines a much needed rest as they essentially hibernate, but then the heavens opened, it rained and rained and rained a touch more. So much so that in some areas the vines were entirely submerged. The major threat once the waters subsided was rot, so usually you could just spray with tractors in the vineyards, but it was too wet for tractors to be used, so special dispensation was granted to allow spraying by helicopter, but that was not always feasible, so it was a case of lugging tanks on your back up and down the vines; backbreaking work at its worst.

To make matters worse, for the third year in a row hail hit, particularly in Volnay, Pommard, Savigny-Lès-Beaune and Meursault. Some vineyards were devastated with 80-95% of the crop destroyed! So much so that you will see no 1er Cru Savigny in our list this year given very little was made having taken the hail storm square on. One saving grace here was that the hail hit on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, early enough in most cases that the berries were not sufficiently developed to be written off, but had time to recover over the next two months. The weather improved and the vines were able to make up for lost time and get close to the ripeness levels required, albeit with the aid of a little chaptalisation.

On arrival into the winery, a careful selection had to take place, with some larger négociants like Drouhin using optical sorting tables, however this was not feasible for the smaller growers of course given limited finances. Instead these smaller domaines needed to get to work yet again and painstakingly sort the bunches by hand. At this stage the forecast for the resultant wine was mixed and post fermentation many winemakers were expecting a slightly leaner than ideal final wine, but after a delayed and very long malo-lactic fermentation those who worked hard throughout the year or those who were just lucky had wines which flourished and surpassed expectations. The mood was certainly brighter when we visited this year versus last year post-fermentation.

### The Whites

Given the late ripening and the greater freshness in the wines in 2013, along with reduced total sugar levels it is perhaps no surprise that the whites outshone the reds overall in my opinion. Especially so for my taste where I find those vintages like 2008 or 2010 with elevated acidity and more focussed fruit more appealing than the slight overripeness found in 2009 for example.

I think Chassagne-Montrachet and St Aubin were the most consistent performers here in general, and although Meursault was hit again by hail Domaine Antoine Jobard has to be commended for producing some absolutely magnificent wines proving that while hail reduces volume it doesn't necessarily impact quality.

Producers of note:

*Domaine Bernard Moreau*

*Domaine Antoine Jobard*

*Domaine Jean Chartron*

*Domaine Bachelet-Monnot*

### The Reds

A lot more variable a vintage on the whole with a range of very good wines, but we did try plenty of indifferent wines. Some producers we have entirely dropped this year which could be problematic for future vintages, but we don't want to be offering wines we don't rate. Plenty of charming red fruit, not unlike what you would find in the 2012s; perfumed and aromatic, mid-weight rather than having the density you would find in the 2005s say. In most cases, they are not wines to lay down and forget about for decades whereas I would suggest many of the 2012s now do need to be cellared.

There is far greater consistency in the Côte de Nuits than in the Côte de Beaune and going north of Beaune it's rather difficult to flag up any appellation which had surpassed the others, though Vosne-Romanée and Chambolle-Musigny I think just pip the rest. Special praise must be given to Gregory Gouges again who is producing outstanding Nuits-St-Georges at all levels for mid-long term cellaring. Returning to our offering for the first time since 2006 is the range from Albert Bichot under the smaller Domaine names of Domaine du Clos Frantin, Domaine du Pavillon and Lupé-Cholet, which produced an excellent range with great precision. Despite a couple of vintages which have not stood out quite so much, I'm delighted to report Dujac have probably produced the best wines we tasted in 2013 pound for pound; their entry level village wines were an utter delight.

Producers of note:

*Domaine Dujac*

*Benjamin Leroux*

*Domaines Albert Bichot*

*Domaine Henri Gouges*

*Domaine de la Vougeraie*

Angus McLean, Laithwaite's Fine Wine, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014