

LA COTE CHALONNAISE

-Burgundy's "forgotten" region

How can a Burgundy wine district located immediately south of the acclaimed Cote d'Or, and producing 2.1 million cases of AOC wines, become overlooked or "forgotten"? We will attempt to unravel that mystery below, but, first, one must recognize that there is a fresh wind blowing stimulating opportunity and development in the Cote Chalonnaise as it awakens from its slumber. There is a cadre of new generation, quality-oriented winemakers in the Cote replanting vineyards with better parent material and using improved vinification. The result is better quality wines across the board. In addition, several large Beaune-based negociants, such as, Bouchard Pere et Fils, Faiveley, Louis Jadot, and Louis Latour, have invested heavily in the Cote. This contributes to better availability and excellent price/quality relationships for Chalonnaise wines in the marketplace. At a time when Cote d'Or wines are being priced beyond the reach of most discerning wine enthusiasts, isn't it wise to explore the gems of the Cote Chalonnaise?

Factors contributing to the Cote Chalonnaise's "forgotten" status

1. Fewer recognizable appellations

Almost one half of the Cote's wine production is bottled as AOC regional "Bourgogne" wine. Thus, it is not recognizable as coming from the Chalonnaise. Furthermore, in the Cote d'Or, there are 69 distinct appellations on wine labels, in the Chalonnaise there are only seven.

2. Less production and distribution than the Cote d'Or

Wine production in the Cote Chalonnaise is about 44% that of La Cote d'Or and almost half of that is unidentifiable as coming from the Chalonnaise. In fact, the majority of Chalonnaise wine production is classified in Burgundy's regional classification, whereas, the majority of Cote d'Or wine enjoys higher classifications.

3. Fewer "star" performers, less press, fewer visitors and advocates

Celebrity sells and draws media attention, which, in turn, creates consumer interest. The Cote d'Or bathes in the limelight of the wine press and is the choice destination for wine writers and wine enthusiasts alike. However, the Cote Chalonnaise is customarily "passed-by" during time-constrained Burgundy visits. The end result is less publicity, less exposure, and little glamor.

A COTE CHALONNAISE PRIMER

References: Inside Burgundy by Jasper Morris MW, Berry Bros & Rudd Press, London, 2010

The Wines of Burgundy, by Sylvain Pitiot and Jean-Charles Servant, Twelfth English Edition, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012

Village-Level (Communal) Wine Appellations (North to South)

1. Bouzeron (Aligote only)

- a. Promoted to full villages status in 1998.
- b. 116 acres under vine.
- c. 32,000 cases average annual wine production.
- d. Top producer is A&P de Villaine.
- e. Only village-level aligote wine in Burgundy.

2. Rully (red, white, and cremant)

- a. 23 premiers crus.
- b. Still wine production is 68% white (chardonnay)
- c. 882 acres under vine.
- d. 186,222 cases average annual still wine production.
- e. Estimated 350,000 cases of Cremant de Bourgogne produced annually.
- f. Select Producers: Jean-Claude Breliere; Paul & Marie Jacqueson; Christophe Grandmougin.

3. Mercurey (red and white)

- a. 31 premiers crus.
- b. Village wine production is 85% red.
- c. Largest wine producing village in Burgundy.
- d. 1595 acres under vine.
- e. 309,000 cases average annual wine production.
- f. Red wine style considered richest and firmest of the Chalonnaise.
- g. Selected producers: Michel Juillot; Bruno Lorenzon; Francois Raquillet.

4. Givry (red and white)

- a. 26 premiers crus.
- b. Village wine production is 81% red.
- c. Prior to phylloxera (1880s), the most sought wines of the Chalonnaise.
- d. Received the royal endorsement of King Henry IV at the end of the 16th century.
- e. 665 acres under vine.
- f. 146,722 cases average annual wine production.
- g. Red wine style characterized as more elegant than the reds of Mercurey.

h. Selected producers: Jean-Marc & Vincent Joblot; Gardin-Perrotto; Francois Lumpp.

5. Montagny (chardonnay only)

- a. 49 premiers crus.
- b. Geology differs from rest of the Chalonaise with older soils comprised of sand and quartz, in addition to clay/limestone.
- c. Home of one of Burgundy's finest cooperatives, Cave des Vignerons de Buxy, which produces 75% of the appellation's wines.
- d. 768 acres under vine.
- e. 203,167 cases average annual wine production.
- f. Wine style is fuller, rounder, and riper than the leaner, crisp style of Rully blanc.
- g. Selected producers: Stephane Aladame; Chateau de la Saule; Cave des Vignerons de Buxy.

Regional-level Wine Appellations

1. Bourgogne Cote du Couchois (red only)

- a. Northwest portion of the Chalonaise.
- b. 15 acres under vine.
- c. 5,111 cases average annual wine production.

2. Bourgogne Cote Chalonnaise (red and white)

- a. Red wine production is 72% of total.
- b. 1138 acres under vine.
- c. 289,000 cases average annual wine production.