



Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot

Burgundy, France

THIS ANCIENT VINEYARD IS A DIAMOND AMONG RUBIES.

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Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot entry gate.

HOLLY LEITNER

This year marks the 900th anniversary of the first harvest of white grapes from Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot, the famed "golden triangle" surrounded by a sea of Pinot Noir vines. It all started in a place called Cîteaux, where, in 1098, St. Bernard and his followers meticulously planted grapevines around their abbey for the production of sacramental wine. The graceful Cistercians thus became the first *vignerons* in what is now one of the world's greatest terroirs, the Clos de Vougeot.

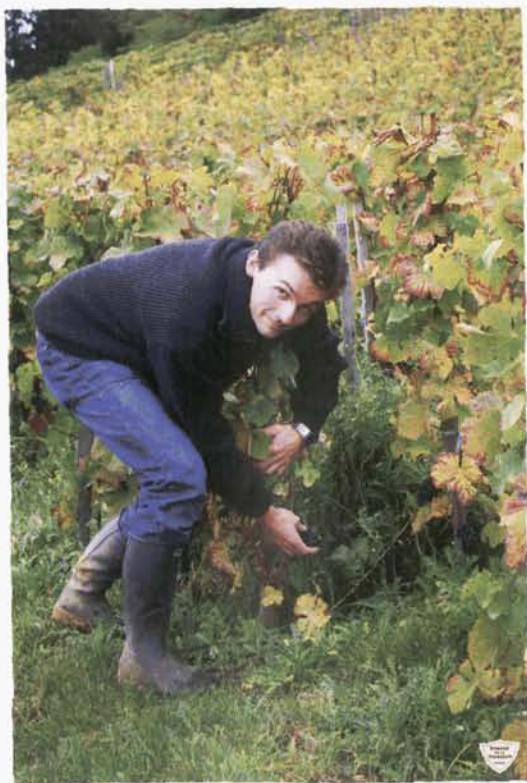
A 5.7-acre plot on the west side of the clos's northern wall, nicknamed the Petit Clos Blanc de Cîteaux, or "little white vineyard," was dedi-

cated to white grape-growing. Now called Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot, it has managed to stay intact for nearly a millennium, through wars, devastation, changing ownership, and Napoleonic laws of succession. Even during the French Revolution of 1789, when national property was sold off, Le Clos Blanc remained a monopole. In 1818, Jules Ouvrard, son of a famous speculator and supplier of imperial weapons, bought the land, and the vines were tended by his family until 1889. Succeeding owners were Jules Régnier and L'Héritier-Guyot. In 1998, the monopole was purchased by the Boisset family—which has brought it back to its origins with

Photos courtesy of Domaine de la Vougeraie



TERROIR



Harvest in front of the Château de Clos de Vougeot (above); winemaker Pierre Vincent (left).

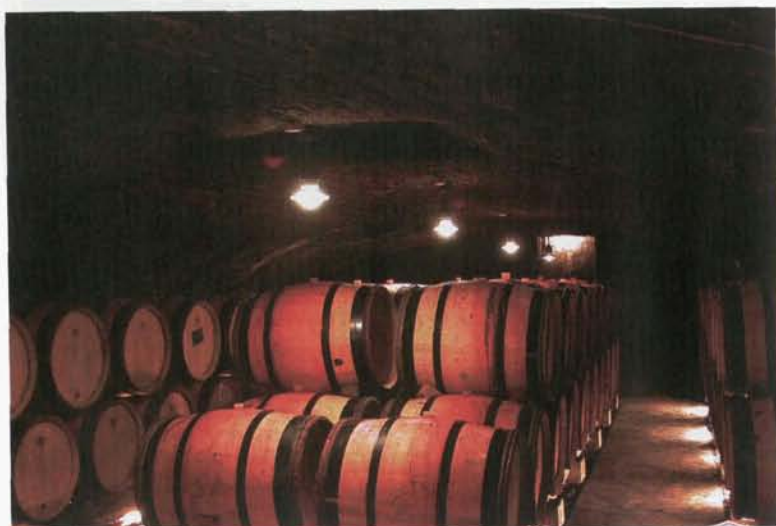
biodynamic and organic viticulture, earning certified organic status in 1999.

Le Clos Blanc lies in front of the historic Château de Clos de Vougeot, which was built in 1551 and is now the headquarters of the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin. Recognized as a premier cru, it is adjoined by the grand cru vineyard of Musigny and the premier cru of Les Amoureuses in the commune of Chambolle-Musigny, right in the heart of the Côte de Nuits. It's divided into two parcels, called Le Grand Carré de la Vigne Blanche and Le Haut de la Vigne Blanche, and planted almost entirely to Chardonnay, with small blocks of Pinot Gris

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Harvest team (left); biodynamic cow horns (above); Vougeraie cellar (middle).



OUTSTANDING RECENT RELEASES

Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot Monopole Premier Cru 2003 \$84

This delicately crafted wine is just reaching harmony. Floral and mineral notes appear on the nose, along with touches of clean sea breeze, citrus, light tropical fruit, and caramel oak, plus a dash of spice at the end. The mineral structure smooths out on the palate, and the finish is refreshing.

Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot Monopole Premier Cru 2005 \$90

The '05 version achieves an elegant balance of nutty apricot flavors and citrus zest, backed by complex minerality and a skim-cream texture. It shows less obvious wood and a much rounder mouthfeel than the '06, finishing crisp and clean.

Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot Monopole Premier Cru 2006 \$84

A nose of heavy oak and vanilla is saved by fresh citrus and tropical-fruit notes. Even though the wood component is stronger than in other vintages, the fruit still stands up.

Prices are current estimated retail.

(4%) and Pinot Blanc (1%). The rootstock, dating from between 1983 and 1996, is 15% *sélection massale*. The calcareous, silty-clay soil in this east-facing, gently sloping vineyard provides good drainage, allowing ample opportunity for the grapes to reach physiological ripeness despite the challenges of cold winters, hot summers, and erratic rainfall.

In 1999, various Boisset vineyards in Burgundy were brought together under the label of Domaine de la Vougeraie, a subsidiary of Boisset Family Estates. Pierre Vincent took over from Pascal Marchand as winemaker in 2006. His overarching agricultural goal is to put back into the soil what the vines have taken out of it—no more, no less. “This is a way of life,” says Vincent. “We work like the old winegrowers, and we don’t dope the vineyards. When you produce in biodynamic, the pips, skins, maturity, and sugar are really better.” Vineyard rows are tilled with horses, and natural materials such as nettle, rhubarb, horsetail, yarrow, tansy, and comfrey tea are used for pest control.

In the winery, Vincent employs a pneumatic press for the hand-sorted whole clusters, then ferments the juice in barrel with no lees stirring. The wine is aged 15-20 months in barriques, no more than 30% new. Around 1,000 cases a year are bottled.

Although the monks moved to their new Abbey of Cîteaux, near Nuits-St.-Georges, in the late 12th century, we can still honor their original sacramental wine on its 900th birthday. In Vincent’s opinion, this “incredible” Burgundy is best enjoyed during a full moon, when the flavors open up. And what better accompaniment than a serving of Cîteaux cheese? 🍷