



Looking For More Great Wine Conversation?

Home > Blogs > Oz Clarke's Adventures

e-mail | print | save | share

Member Quick Links	
Personal Wine List	My Library
Wine Ratings Search	Value Wines
Vintage Charts	Top 100 of 2010
Insider	Advance
Wine Spectator School	My Courses
Customer Care	Logout

oz clarke's adventures

Puzzling Over Burgundy

First impressions can change with time

Posted: Jan 25, 2011 11:00am ET

Like | x | Tweet | 5

0Share

You can get a very strong and not always accurate view of a vintage by turning up on the wrong day. I turned up for the end of the 2010 vintage in Burgundy under sodden late-September skies; lines of rain-coated pickers were spread across the slopes looking like marauding beetles. Could the wines possibly be any good?

But then you can also get a surprisingly warped view of a vintage even if you wait for 15 months, until the tasting season starts. Usually the Burgundy specialists offer their wine for tasting in the January that falls about 15 months after harvest. In January 2010, I had a good look at the 2008 Burgundies and decided that they were in the main thin, hollow and unappealing.

What I didn't know at the time was that most of them had *still* not undergone their malolactic fermentation. Many didn't get there until the spring and some only managed it in early summer, 21 months after the harvest.

Retasting the wines in September 2010, I found that thinness has now transformed into elegance, that lack of appeal is now more likely to appear as restrained but charming scent. Staying power is what Jacques Seysses of Domaine Dujac says his 2008s have. They stain the palate; they're like a tattoo on your skin, albeit a non-permanent one.

But does anyone want the 2008s? Will anyone want the 2010s? That's the problem when you have a superstar vintage sandwiched between two non-stellar offerings. And 2009 *is* a superstar. Just as in 2005, Burgundy has once again mirrored Bordeaux. This doesn't always happen; Burgundy is achieving a fully ripe vintage about three or four years out of 10 at the moment, while Bordeaux is managing exciting quality about seven times in 10. But the fabulous, lush, seductive beauty of 2009 Bordeaux is finding a kindred spirit in 2009 Burgundy.

That doesn't mean that the winemakers are as fond of them as we are. Many serious winemakers are rather self-deprecating about these rich, easy vintages. Someone like Claude Dugat, a superb grower in Gevrey-Chambertin, is more passionate about his 2008s than his 2009s. He puts more blood and sweat into the more difficult vintages. The 2008s drip with his efforts. He said that, as he put his 2008s into barrel, he'd never tasted such acidic wines from his domaine. He's very proud of them now.

So early predictions about 2010's quality simply can't be based on weeping clouds and layers of suffocating fog. It was a cold harvest: It was only 7° C (44.6° F) in the vineyard one morning I was there—cold maceration wasn't going to be a problem, then. But there had been warmer days at the start of the vintage—up to 25° C (77° F) in the afternoons—that gave the 2010s a riper sheen than had looked likely before



Oz Clarke

About Me

My Main Blog Page

Archive

Most Recent Posts:

Jan 11, 2011
 Snapshots of Bordeaux

Dec 28, 2010
 Move Uva Merlot: Make Way for Italian Grapes in California

Dec 14, 2010
 Drinking Local in Texas

See Also:

Featured Blogs

Complete Blog Index

WINE SPECTATOR'S
GRAND TOUR
 CHICAGO
 THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011
 LAS VEGAS
 SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2011
 BOSTON
 THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2011
 ORDER TICKETS NOW

Help Wanted

Wine Spectator has an entry-level position open for a trained journalist with a passion for wine. [See full details.](#)

Free Email Newsletters

Sips & Tips | Wine & Healthy Living | Video Theater
 Collecting & Auctions | New at Wine Spectator

- » [View samples](#)
- » [Or sign up now!](#)
- » [Manage my newsletter preferences](#)

picking began. (See [Wine Spectator's 2010 Vintage Report](#) for more details.)

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--><!--[endif]-->

As much as half the crop was lost through *millerandage*, so the small quantity of fruit was more concentrated and could ripen more successfully. But only up to a point. I chewed through grapes coming in from numerous villages, and the pips were pretty green; the sugars seemed OK, but the skins were surprisingly hard for Pinot.

Yet the good guys are smiling. At Domaine de la Vougeraie, they said that for *real* ripeness they'd rather have picked a week later, but they were quite prepared to double the efforts made with the fruit: being careful with whole bunch maceration because of green stems, being gentle with extraction because of green pips and hard skins. They make three barrels of Musigny, and every bunch was being destemmed by hand. A lot of effort, but a lot of care, too.

The good vineyard sites will shine, the mediocre won't. And anyway, as Véronique Drouhin, of the venerable négociant Maison Drouhin, said, everyone is becoming a bit spoiled. The late harvest would have been regarded as perfectly normal only 10 years ago. And a generation ago, the old timers would have nodded their heads and murmured "*vin vert, bon Bourgogne*"—green wine to start with becomes good wine in time.

Submit your comment

Note: Your real name will be shown with each comment submitted.

Your Name: Boisset Wines

Your City, State, Country: Sausalito, CA

Industry Affiliation: Trade

Please enter your plain text comment below. Limit is 5000 characters.

Your comment:

WineSpectator.com encourages you to add a comment to this discussion. Comments are moderated, in accordance with our [Comment Policy](#), and may be edited for clarity or accuracy, or removed if deemed inappropriate.

Forums: [Wine Conversations](#) | [Share Tasting Notes](#) | [Share Dining Tips](#) | [Travel Tips](#) | [Buying & Selling](#) | [Off-Line Events](#) | [Wine Education](#)

Help: [Customer Care/Manage My Account](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Contact Us](#)

WineSpectator.com: [Become a Member](#) | [Give a WineSpectator.com Gift Membership](#) | [Wine Spectator School](#)

Wine Spectator Magazine: [Subscribe](#) | [Give a Gift Subscription](#) | [Buy Back Issues](#) | [Issue Archives](#) | [Wine Spectator Retailers](#) | [Sell Wine Spectator](#)

Advertise With Us: [Wine Spectator Magazine](#) | [WineSpectator.com](#) | [Wine Spectator Mobile](#) | [Online Classifieds](#) | [M. Shanken Media Kit](#)

About Us: [Site Tour](#) | [Editors' Bios](#) | [How We Taste](#) | [Job Opportunities](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Services: [Apps](#) | [Mobile](#) | [E-mail Newsletters](#) | [RSS](#) | [Video Podcast](#) | [Gift Center](#) | [Online Wine Courses](#) | [Retailer Club](#)

Other M. Shanken Sites: [Trade News—Impact and Market Watch](#) | [Cigar Aficionado](#) | [Food Arts](#) | [Malt Advocate](#)

Categories: [Wine Ratings](#) | [News & Features](#) | [Collecting](#) | [Learn Wine](#) | [Dining & Travel](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Video](#) | [For the Trade](#) | [Wine Shops](#) | [Classifieds](#)

Copyright © 2011 Wine Spectator Online

