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Burgundy Prices Stabilize with 2013 Vintage



© AFP | Release prices of the 2013 grands crus should be similar to prices in 2012.

The 2013 vintage is giving fresh, focused and sensibly priced wines, even though they are in short supply.

By [Adam Lechmere](#) | Posted Thursday, 15-Jan-2015

The Burgundy 2013 pre-release tastings in London have been dominated by two subjects – price, and the 2014 vintage.

Producers are happy with the quality of the 2013, but after a growing season that was bedeviled by a damp cold May and June, apocalyptic hailstorms in July, and a cool September, it was the last in a line of three desperately short years. Those who did not lose crop to hail, lost it to rot. On average volumes were down 30 to 60 percent. In parts of the [Côte de Beaune](#) hail entirely destroyed vineyards.

Vignerons reckon that over the last four years [Burgundy](#) has lost the equivalent of two entire crops. At a time when demand for their wines has never been higher, availability has never been lower. Luckily, 2014, for the first time for three years, delivered a harvest that was only slightly smaller than normal.

"We needed a good big crop to reduce tension," Gregory Patriat, winemaker at Jean-Claude Boisset told Wine Searcher. 2014 may not be huge, but it is a bumper crop compared to what they are used to. Thibault Ligair-Belair, at his eponymous [Nuits-Saint-Georges](#) domaine, said that he had made 145 barrels in 2014, compared with less than 75 in the previous two years.

Across London, as Burgundy merchants hosted producers over three days of tastings, there was palpable relief that perhaps the lean years were over.

"The decent 2014 is cheering everyone up," David Gleave of Liberty Wines said. "They see the light at the end of the tunnel."

At the same time, there is confidence that 2013 has turned out to be a solid, if not stellar, vintage, one that in whites and reds is nicely balanced and accessible, and will be ready to drink before the 2012 and the 2014. Sandrine Audegone at Domaine Laroche said she was very pleased with the quality of the [Chablis](#), adding: "It's not one for long keeping but it's fresh and approachable now."

"It's a classic Burgundy vintage," Justerini & Brooks' buying director Giles Burke-Gaffney told Wine Searcher. "It's low in alcohol, with juicy and fresh tannins."

Early indications are that the critics agree. "It is fresh and focused," Jancis Robinson said on her [website](#) [↗] this week. The wines are "generally delightfully terroir-specific... from the right addresses, wines for true Burgundy lovers".

As to prices, producers are acutely aware of the conundrum that they must stay stable even as markets become keener and keener on their wines. They hope not to repeat the mistakes of Bordeaux, where price rises over the last few years have alienated both the Asian and the U.S. markets.

Prices of the 2013 vintage are lower than or equal to 2012, though any such restraint should be seen in the context of hefty price rises – in some cases by 50 per cent – from 2011 to 2012.

"Burgundians feel their prices are too high," Jasper Morris, Burgundy director at Berry Bros and Rudd said. "But there is some calming; there's a desire to minimize the bubble."

"We've reached the ceiling," Patriat said. "There's a temptation to put up prices, but we mustn't go further."

The problem for producers of the most celebrated wines is that they have little or no control over how they sell in the secondary market.

"The demand for grand cru Burgundy is rising," [Chambolle-Musigny](#)'s Frédéric Mugnier of Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier said. "But there is no way production will rise." This gulf between supply and demand fuels speculation, "and we fight to keep speculation down".