

• Antonio Galloni vinOUS

A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021

BY NEAL MARTIN | OCTOBER 9, 2025

Burgfest bookends each summer—whites in May, reds in September. This year I've combined the two tastings into a single report. It bears repeating that Burgfest is a unique tasting for several reasons: the number and calibre of wines, the glitterati of acclaimed producers, provenance insofar that bottles come directly from wineries and, of course, the opportunity to compare the wines blind against their peers. As tradition dictates, the tastings took place at the secluded Hameau du Barbaron in Savigny-lès-Beaune, surrounded by forest-dwelling boar, deer and birds of prey. Sadly, Lili, the scruffy Dachshund who valiantly guarded us from wild beasts and occasionally sauntered inside for a sniff around, had gone to the great kennel in the sky.

This year's focus was 2021, a vintage I am fond of. When dining in Beaune, I habitually flick to the *"Vieux Millésimes"* and peruse the 2021s. Apologies for my facetiousness, but it does stick in my craw that so many are fated to be drunk when the clinking of glass bottles has barely stopped ricocheting off the winery walls. The downside is that this vintage saw widespread price hikes—excused by smaller volumes—that, surprise surprise, failed to come back down in the abundant 2022 and 2023 vintages.



Eyes down, busy tasting.

Contrary to what one might expect given diminished volumes, around 450 Premier Crus and Grand Crus were assembled for the two tastings. The usual rubric applied, with flights organised per vineyard, broaching more or less one appellation each day. The first flight began at 8:30 AM sharp and continued for however long it took, with a short break at what is referred to as *gougère o'clock*.

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The Growing Season

For a detailed rundown of the growing season, I refer readers to my main [2021 report](#).

Two thousand twenty-one was the year of the notorious frost that devastated vast tracts of vine on April 5 when temperatures plummeted to -7° C. The so-called black frost, when a mass of freezing air descends and blankets entire vineyards, meant there was no escape, unlike a normal frost when higher altitudes are less impacted. This mass of Arctic air squatted over the Côte d'Or for three days. Chardonnay's earlier growth cycle meant that it was more affected compared to Pinot Noir, some parcels losing between 80% and 100% of their nascent buds. Therefore, 2021 is one of those years where it is wise to mentally separate the whites and reds, treat them as if they're born from different growing seasons.

The shock of this frost episode upset vines' growth cycles. To quote Jadot winemaker Frédéric Barnier, "By the end of May, it looked like the beginning of April in the vineyards." To compound these woes, summer was wet, mildew endemic with localised outbreaks of *oidium*. Spraying and protecting vines was a case of rushing out in the rare spells of dryness, just like in 2024. July saw fewer sunlight hours, but at least the energy was distributed amongst fewer bunches. Warmth in August made up some of the lag in ripeness levels. It was inevitably a late harvest, with most picking teams trooping out around September 20. Some producers were wrong-footed by incorrect weather forecasts when heavy rain never materialised. However, there were outbreaks of *botrytis*, a key factor that I will return to forthwith. At least producers did not have to expedite the picking as you might have done in an earlier, hot growing season. That more leisurely, piecemeal approach meant that one could undertake sorting in the vineyard, which was vital. Between five and fifteen percent of the fruit was discarded, either in the vines or at winery receptions.

The Wines

This Burgfest ignited more debate and dissension than any other. Disagreements and divergent scores flew across the room. This is always embraced because the goal is never to form consensus, but to respectfully listen to the opinions of others. I cannot overstate how much is learned from this healthy debate, not to infer that it alters my opinion. However, regarding *causes célèbres* such as botrytis, stem addition, reduction and cork taint, there is nothing wrong with being forced to question your view, revisit a wine, look at it from a different angle. Just because you did not perceive TCA or VA does not mean there isn't any.

Let me present the headlines from this year's Burgfest, though I recommend reading further as I drill down into individual flights.

- 1) The 2021 vintage favours reds over whites and the Côte de Nuits over the Côte de Beaune.
- 2) It can be termed a "classical" vintage, a shift away from the tropical-tinged whites and sumptuous, black-fruited, alcoholic reds.
- 3) That said, the hot spell in August led to a surprising level of ripeness in some wines.
- 4) The growing season capped the heights that the wines could achieve. No single flight got everyone's pulses racing or merited unanimous acclaim.
- 5) There are pluses and minuses, highs and lows within a set of wines, even after limiting the purview to the best producers.
- 6) Still, the best wines are definitely worth seeking out. Had 2021 happened 20 years earlier, the vintage might have been unsalvageable.
- 7) Burgfest raised issues too often ignored...not in this report! See "Final Thoughts" for reflections on sulphur, whole-bunch addition, *Brettanomyces* and new oak.

The Whites

My main gripe with respect to the whites is not so much a lack of ripeness per se, but rather that a percentage of wines were afflicted by botrytis, scuppering what otherwise could have been an enticing "old-school" white Burgundy shorn of the tropical traits that traditionalists grumble about. A ruthless peer group tasting such as Burgfest exposes the also-rans, those that do not pass muster. Similarly, it highlights those that succeeded against the odds. In my [January 2023 report](#), I wrote, "The 2021 whites might be ridiculously small in volume, but the fruit that survived the 2021 obstacle course benefitted from those crucial weeks of sun and warmth in late August and September. Bizarrely, they sometimes convey traits of warmer vintages with traces of tropical fruit that counterpoint the acidity." I went on to highlight the quality found in Chassagne-Montrachet and contentiously suggested that the Grand Crus were not necessarily the apex in quality.

Would that hold now that the wines are in bottle?

White Burgfest opened with Chablis. Hopes were not necessarily sky high, though the cooler growing season raised expectations of atavistic Chablis with more malic, steely traits. Despite the calibre of the wines, it was a tepid start. There were too many misfires. The opening series from the likes of Les Lys and Côte de Léchet saw wild swings in quality, with only Domaine Pommier warranting *bon mots*. Even one of my favourite growers, Samuel Billaud, suffered a poor batting performance at the crease, his wines not correlating with previous experiences. Eventually, some Chablis were warmly received, such as Louis Michel's Butteaux and Montée de Tonnerre, and Grossot's Monts de Milieu. I was looking for scraps of enjoyment. That life-affirming run of the Chablis of yore never materialised. The Grand Crus were only marginally better; few wines delivered, except for Benoît Droin's Valmur and Christian Moreau's Les Clos (which outshone Moreau's special bottling from Clos des Hospices).

We moved on to Saint-Aubin, the first flight crowned by a fine Saint-Aubin en Montceau 1er Cru from Marc Colin & Fils and a delightful Le Sentier du Clou from Antoine Jobard, not to mention an energetic Saint-Aubin Oratorium Sanctum Albini from Damien Colin's brother Joseph Colin. (I presumed this was a fantasy name, but it is, in fact, the Latin phrase for the lieu-dit.) Otherwise, the wines were good but not great, considering grower pedigree. The second flight of Saint-Aubin saw a splendid En Remilly from both Olivier Lamy and Marc Colin & Fils, though perhaps the best value might be the Les Murgers des Dents de Chien from Jean Chartron. These two flights set the tone for the rest of the week where the wines—intermittently besmirched by botrytis—never quite met expectations.

Flights from Chassagne-Montrachet were organized geographically, moving uphill from clay to limestone soil. Initial flights from the lower reaches were inconsistent, though matters improved at the higher vineyards. Thierry Pillot of Domaine Paul Pillot merits superlatives for his scintillating La Romanée that eclipsed his Les Grandes Ruchottes. I had a question mark over Pillot's La Grande Montagne, but then again, you can't win 'em all. Others that shone were the Les Fairendes from Coffinet-Duvernay, Clos St. Marc from Domaine Olivier Leflaive. Overall, it was a better showing than Saint-Aubin, though Chassagne-Montrachet was not the fount of thrills seen in recent vintages.

Though Chassagne-Montrachet was my pick of appellations out of barrel, Meursault has the edge in bottle. The first flight focused on lower reaches, such as Bouchères and Porusots, where Domaine des Comtes-Lafon's Porusots was the standout, closely followed by Jean-Marc Roulot's Clos des Bouchères. One pleasant surprise was the quality of Domaine Génot-Boulanger's Les Bouchères—*chapeau* to winemaker Guillaume Lavollée. Interspersed amongst these were other wines that left a few of us scratching our heads: the Le Porusot from Buisson-Battault and Antoine Jobard's Meursault-Blagny, which continued a forgettable Burgfest for him. The standalone flights of Meursault Genevrières saw a fantastic wine from Domaine Bouchard Père, far superior to its lacklustre showing from barrel, plus an impressive and slightly richer take on the vintage courtesy of Domaine Michel Bouzereau. Indeed, it was a strong Burgfest for Bouzereau, who won praise for his Charmes-Dessus in the next flight. Hot on its heels were Comtes-Lafon and Château de Meursault, though this flight was a bit of a rollercoaster and provoked discord amongst the group. Perhaps as expected, Les Perrières provided the high point for Meursault with a stunning 2021 from Comtes-Lafon.

Is there anyone better when Lafon hits their stride?

The biggest surprise was an electrifying Les Perrières from Domaine Didier Darviot-Perrin, with vivid *mineralité* and tension—complex and life-affirming, this is where Côte de Beaune is untouchable. Hearty rounds of applause were also due for the Les Perrières from Bitouzet-Prieur, Thierry Matrot and Pierre Girardin. With respect to the latter, winemaker Pierre-Vincent Girardin has rapidly acquired a cult status with commensurate prices. Whilst his lineup was not a royal flush of great wines, under blind conditions, this tasting proved that the accolades are merited.



Puligny-Montrachet occupied Thursday. Circling Champs Gain and smaller lieux-dits, the Clos des Noyers from Alvina Pernot and the Hameau de Blagny from Domaine la Chapelle de Blagny performed well. However, the flight of Les Referts and Champ Canet was underwhelming except for a wonderful Champ Canet from Sauzet. The next series from Les Combettes was topsy-turvy. Dujac's seemed to show some botrytis that was not tangible when tasted from concrete egg, bearing similarities to a Levrouée wine from Viré-Clessé, which I assume was not the original intention. Thankfully, Leflaive's Les Combettes displayed winemaker Pierre Vincent's magic touch, though, of course, he departed three years later. Meanwhile, Bachelet-Monnot was a veritable livewire with plenty of energy. Folatières was up next and, as usual, Olivier Leflaive won unanimous praise. Jean-Michel Chartron also excelled. Chartron won more admiration in the following flight courtesy of a vivacious, citrus-driven Clos de la Pucelle. Again, the Alvina Pernot proved that my praise in recent reports was well founded, although there were perplexing showings elsewhere. Olivier Leflaive's reeked of "smoky bacon crisps," and Henri Boillot's was upended by botrytis. The final flight of Caillerets saw the Pulignys finishing on a high with a mineral-driven Clos du Caillerets from Chartron and a sapid example from de Montille.

Friday was a fun-packed day of Grand Crus. There were two flights of Corton-Charlemagne, a dozen wines that regrettably no longer include Bonneau du Martray. This is a notoriously up-and-down flight because of diverse elevations, orientations and calibres. The best turned out to be from Domaine Bouchard Père and Camille Giroud, but there were murmurings of disappointment from de Montille, Rémi Rollin and the bottle from Pierre Girardin that several participants declined to score. The flight of Bâtard-Montrachets was crowned by strong showings from Chartron (again) and Coffinet-Duvernay, not to mention the Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine Jean-Claude Bachelet, whose '21s garnered mixed reactions, in part because the oakier style feels exaggerated at this point in the wines' evolution. Again, the wine from Pierre-Vincent Girardin divided the room and, as I wrote in my tasting note, begat aromas more akin to a Riesling from Clare Valley than a Côte de Beaune!



We had the privilege of tasting eight wines from Chevalier Montrachet. Predictably, Domaine Leflaive stormed away with a scintillating wine blessed with a sense of symmetry that was a wonder to behold. Jean-Michel Chartron completed his best Burgfest ever with his own energetic, spicier Clos de Chevaliers that surely represents the best value. This flight exposed Burgundy's liminal line between euphoria and disappointment. These wines command some of the region's highest prices, but that does not preclude a handful being underwhelming, lacking *mineralité* or complexity. This illuminates the vital role winemakers play in delivering wines that match vineyard reputations.

We finished the week with three Montrachets, down from the usual five due to the growing season. Not for the first time, I had reservations over the Montrachet from Domaine des Comtes-Lafon. It was the least favoured amongst the group by a considerable margin, and TCA was not culpable since the wine is closed under a DIAM "30 Origine" cork. The top "Monty" was from Domaine Bouchard Père & Fils. Congratulations to winemaker Frédéric Weber.

The Reds

We convened in September to look at the reds, beginning with two flights from the Beaune appellation. It was a mixed bag. This is partly because the tasting missed some of Beaune's best exponents, though more often the low points were due to a lack of depth or flaws in winemaking. There were one or two excessively reductive bottlings. Dominique Lafon showed his winemaking chops with a fine Beaune Epenottes. This could go a long way. Others, including de Montille's Beaune Grèves, had shown potential from barrel but have run out of energy in bottle.

The first flight of Volnay did not pass muster, with a discernible lack of complexity, but the second flight delivered the sensuality and roundness expected. The joint flight of Volnay Clos des Chênes and Taillepieds was a complete let-down, brittle and lacking complexity, not a recurring blight. Given the reputation and prices of these Premier Crus, such wines tarnish Burgundy's reputation. I wondered whether that day's miserable weather may have contributed to the poor showings. Thank the Lord for de Montille's Volnay Taillepieds, which provided some relief. Kudos to winemaker Brian Sieve. Overall, Volnay never clicked into gear. The two flights from Pommard provided similar results. However, Domaine Violot-Guillemard hit the jackpot with a sublime Les Rugiens, closely followed by an excellent Les Rugiens-Bas from Pierre-Vincent Girardin.

Day two saw two flights of Corton with the inconsistencies that one expects. I suppose the real question here is whether these wines are genuinely Grand Cru level. The answer is...it depends. On the other hand, there has been a rising tide in quality and given these wines carry less of a premium vis-à-vis other Grand Crus, there are rich pickings if you choose carefully and prioritise grower over lieu-dit. Here, I found the Le Corton from Tollot-Beaut has much to offer. Michel Mallard (now full-time in Ladoix after leaving Domaine d'Eugénie) acquitted himself well with his Rognet and Renards, as did David Croix with his Corton La Vigne Au Saint Croix. But overall, not a convincing performance from Corton.

Four flights from Nuits Saint-Georges ahoy, commencing with a cluster of monopoles around the village of Prémieux-Prissey. Annoyingly, the two from Domaine Michel et Patrice Rion performed opposite to their barrel showing, i.e., the Clos des Argillières outshone the Clos Saint-Marc. The Clos des Grands Vignes from Comte du Liger-Belair "reeked of money," to quote one attendee, the quality of new oak lending a seductive sheen. Moving further north in the appellation, the next flight began with a querulous showing of Grivot's Les Pruliers, though matters improved with strong efforts from Taupenot-Merme and Henri Gouges. The latter enjoyed their best Burgfest in years, attesting to recent investments in the winery. The third flight focused upon Les-Saint-Georges and Vaucrains and was, for me, the most consistent and promising flight. Superb wines from Robert Chevillon, Faiveley and, again, Gouges suggest that there are solid grounds for promoting the former to Grand Cru status. These raised my expectations for the final flight that zoned in on northern Nuits Saint-Georges bordering Vosne-Romanée...

This was one of the most vexing flights I can remember at any Burgfest, with instances of TCA and volatility, underperforming wines that were pale imitations of their showing in barrel, and a La Richemone from the excellent Domaine Gérard Mugneret that tasted nothing like Pinot Noir. It was reminiscent of a Japanese natural wine that I drank in June that had overpowering cassis scents. Thankfully, the Les Boussetots from Domaine Jean Chauvenet restored some kind of order.



The day finished with 16 wines from Clos de Vougeot split over two flights. As expected, there were variations, though not to the degree of previous years. Jean-Marc Millot was the surprise victor in the first flight, while Domaine de la Vougeraie continued a successful Burgfest with a splendid wine from within the famous medieval walls. That said, there was nothing spectacular, nothing that set pulses racing.

Vosne-Romanée might be the most esteemed appellation in the Côte de Nuits, but based on this tasting, it is not the strongest in 2021. We began with a flight from Malconsorts, where Dujac, Comte de Liger-Belair and the interloping Clos d'Eugénie delivered the goods, and Méo-Camuzet passed muster. However, I was disappointed by the flight of Les Suchots, too often compromised by fixed reduction or a misguided percentage of stems. Fortunately, Amélie Berthaut of Domaine Berthaut-Gerbet and Pierre-Vincent Girardin showed what was possible. The following mixed flight from vineyards further up the slope was inconsistent, with a misjudged use of whole bunch, a subject I'll discuss in my closing comments.

The next flight focused on Premier Crus further up the slope, some of the most revered. That does not preclude them from criticism. There is no free pass by dint of history, price or track record. I found the wines intermittently disappointing and, dare I say, inferior to some of the top Pinots that I tasted in South Africa a month earlier—a statement that might raise the hackles of some. Before their identities were revealed, I bemoaned the wines from Domaine Jean-Pierre Guyon as hampered by insufficient sulphur—raw and excessively stemmy, with unappetising finishes. Was I being mean? No. Because these were swiftly followed by the brilliant Les Petit-Monts from Amélie Berthaut, which nonchalantly put the shortcomings of the previous wines in sharp relief, delivering everything they missed.

We had around a dozen Echézeaux, often given short shrift as the lesser of the Grand Crus. There are wines worth seeking out, such as those from Pierre-Vincent Girardin, Comte du Liger-Belair and Domaine du Clos Frantin (part of **Albert Bichot**). Others were a bit meagre, occasionally lacking substance and complexity.



The Grand Crus of Romanée-Saint-Vivant and Richebourg were short in number, but it is still a privilege to compare these wines blind. Without any disrespect, few of us expected Thibault Liger-Belair to romp home with a stunning Richebourg, earning the highest average score from the group for its irresistible velvety texture and length that just goes on and on and on. Also, hats off to the Richebourg from Domaine A.F. Gros that exuded class and grandeur.

The first wine poured on the day dedicated to Gevrey-Chambertin was outstanding. It turned out to be the solitary representative from Fixin—Berthaut's Les Arvelets! The following Gevreys were mediocre, except for Taupenot-Merme's Bel Air. The second mixed flight of Gevrey-Chambertin was underwhelming, and Dujac's Aux Combottes never came close to fulfilling its potential from barrel. (That said, the whole bunch addition *does* mean such wines go through awkward phases. I suspect it will coalesce with bottle age and, cross fingers, soak up those stems.) Matters got far more interesting when broaching the Lavaux Saint-Jacques. This marked a conspicuous step up in quality, with a couple of outstanding wines from Arnaud Mortet, both Domaine and négociant, fashioned in a classical style. Domaines Rousseau and Henri Magnien also deserve applause. The next flight from Les Cazetiers included strong performances from Faiveley and Henri Magnien, though I was perplexed by the Rousseau bottle that showed excessive VA.



The quintet from Clos Saint-Jacques is always one of the most intellectually satisfying blind tastings of the year. Who will come out on top? Unlike last year, I failed to identify every wine, save for Sylvie Esmonin, which is always stylistically distinct from its siblings. This was not the greatest lineup of Clos Saint-Jacques—an improvement over Les Cazetiers and Lavaux, albeit not a significant leap. This year, Jean-Marie Fourrier's Clos Saint-Jacques pipped Rousseau and Bruno Clair, delivering the sophistication that you demand from this propitious vineyard.

The Charmes/Mazoyères-Chambertin flight performed above expectations thanks to the Mazoyères wines from Taupenot-Merme and Domaine Tawse, though the Charmes-Chambertin from Domaine Arlaud seemed to oxidise in the glass. The small flight of Ruchottes and Chapelle-Chambertin was a rollercoaster ride. This was another year when Château de Marsannay showed its mettle, undervalued compared to more auspicious producers. The Ruchottes-Chambertin from Domaine Henri Magnien displayed an incongruous eucalyptus scent that obscured the fruit and smothered *typicité*—not the only culprit. This trait could derive from underripe fruit, notwithstanding that menthol is not a facet I want in red Burgundy, as it easily overwhelms the sensitive Pinot Noir. The Latricières and Mazis-Chambertin flight also saw its own ups and downs, with Drouhin-Laroze's Latricières coming out trumps.

Between the two flights of Chambertin-Clos de Bèze and Chambertin, the former delivered the high spots. The Chambertin quintet was hampered by one faulty bottle and a Rousseau that did not click into gear. Was it corked? It was marginal, so marginal that it was easy to see an exquisite wine behind that taint. Domaine J-L Trapet's Chambertin provided the gravitas you expect from this historical vineyard. Clos de Bèze can be harder to read in its youth, but the 2021s from Bruno Clair, Rousseau and Duroché are exemplars of classic red Burgundy, the likes of which thought to be extinct due to global warming.

There were two flights of Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru. Again, these were extremely variable, underscoring the importance of choosing carefully in this vintage, even among reputed growers. Bonnes-Mares was a strong flight, shifting away from the more opulent style seen in vintages like 2020 or 2022 and towards a mineral-driven red expression of Pinot Noir. Standouts include Bruno Clair, Arlaud, and de Vogüé, though perhaps I was hoping for a little more from Roumier. The flight of Musigny and Chambolle Les Amoureuses was the standout of the entire Burgfest. This delivered. Jean Lapatelli proved once and for all how his assiduous rejigging of the modus operandi has rejuvenated Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé, fashioning more refined and elegant wines and turning out an impressive Musigny Vieilles Vignes. Even this was outclassed by his sensational Les Amoureuses—within my top three wines of this Burgfest. And whilst Domaine J-F Mugnier had a mixed showing, his Musigny is undoubtedly glorious, one of his finest in recent years.

The Issues

That concluded Burgfest. Apropos the whites, it would be unfair to describe the 2021s as disappointing, though it is not my favourite recent vintage, hobbled by mediocrity and instances of rot. Factor in the price of these wines and it's a bit like Russian roulette. Hopes that the cooler season might engender appealing and less tropical whites were not fully realised. That is not to say that there aren't fine examples here and there. You just have to buy with prudence and dodge those bullets.

In 2021, the red wines are better. I appreciate how they veer away from black fruit and towards red fruit, where Pinot Noir reaches its apogee. There are some quite marvellous wines, though it is certainly patchy, so consumers must focus carefully. Do not presume just because Burgundy avoided the heatwaves witnessed in other years that 2021 is a shoo-in vintage of classic Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It is not that simple.

As usual, Burgfest raised issues that only crop up when you undertake such a tasting, and these must be discussed.

There is a trend towards minimising sulphur usage, not just in Burgundy but elsewhere, part of the vogue for lower-intervention winemaking. It's cool. This practice appeals to the younger generation, not least sommeliers, in the belief that it fosters more terroir-driven and superior wines. I have a shortcut button on my laptop that types "No sulphur added until after malo." Problem solved?

There are positives *and* negatives to adopting this approach, the latter often ignored. In comprehensive tastings, I find these wines less stable. There is more variation between bottles. There are increased instances of fixed reduction, I suspect because of more prevalent anaerobic vinification to compensate for the reduction or absence of sulphur, potentially poleaxing what could have been a splendid wine. Reduction might be exacerbated by a lack of nitrogen in the soil, leading to stuck ferments and hydrogen sulphide. This is not being reported enough because so much assessment nowadays is undertaken in barrel or immediately after bottling. The remit of the winemaker does not extend beyond the winery and so, much like premature oxidation, reduction is viewed as a problem outside their jurisdiction. There is also a concomitant frequency of Brettanomyces. This is concerning in a cooler growing season, which theoretically should see less spoilage because of the less alcoholic environment. The 2021 vintage also saw misjudged use of new oak. Smaller volumes meant that some producers had an excess quantity of preordered barrels, so in some instances, the impact of new oak was too high, especially given the light fruit and tannins.

Lastly, I am a proponent of whole bunch. If push comes to shove, I probably prefer wines with optimal use of stems. However, that is not a panacea for superior wine. The usage must be judged correctly.

Are the stems fully lignified?

How are they added into the must?

How do they combine with the fruit?

Will their influence fully assimilate during the wine's evolution?

These variables come into play as the wines evolve. A winemaker might possess all the skill in the world, but every season presents a novel set of circumstances, and the success or failure of whole bunch can only be adjudged in hindsight. A wine should not be defined by stems. Stems should not obscure terroir expression and/or fruit profile. Whole bunch should be the seasoning, the subtle top-note that enhances a wine, gives it another dimension. In a season like 2021 where there is less substance, less fruit to absorb the stems, the truth is that the stems frequently protrude, too prominent within the mix. This is one reason that few wines achieve high scores.

Final Thoughts

Despite these caveats, there is much to like in 2021. Some write the vintage off because the challenges of the growing season imply that it was impossible to make fine wine. On the contrary, it is a vintage with the USPs that many Burgundy lovers seek: red fruit, drinkability, more freshness and lower alcohol levels. However, these days, when Burgundy is fetishized and objectivity is skewed due to rarity or price, Burgfest is a timely reminder that no region, grower or cru is infallible. How boring it would be if they were. I understand that some reviews in this report might be considered harsh or contrary to incumbent notes in the database. But if translating reality risks undermining credibility, so be it.

Blind tasting such sensitive and mercurial wines reaffirms the capriciousness of great Burgundy...but that is why I love it.

Albert Bichot (Domaine du Clos Frantin)

2021 Vosne-Romanée Les Malconsorts 1er Cru

Wine Details

Producer
Albert Bichot (Domaine du Clos Frantin)

Place of Origin
France
Vosne-Romanée
Burgundy

Color
Red

Grape/Blend
Pinot Noir

Vintages

Reviews & Tasting Notes

☐ **90**
Drinking Window
2026 - 2039

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Vosne-Romanée Les Malconsorts 1er Cru is a tad more open than Domaine de Montille's Malconsorts with red cherries, crushed strawberry scents, rose petals in an antique vase and cinnamon. The palate is pretty with tart red cherry fruit, allspice and clove. Nicely balanced, nothing overly complex but there is a pleasing insistent grip and a sapid finish to tempt you back for more. A step up from the bottle tasted in January 2023. Drink over the next 12 to 15 years. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on September 2025

☐ **87**
Drinking Window
2024 - 2030

From: Servants of the Seasons: Burgundy 2021 (Jan 2023)

The 2021 Vosne-Romanée Les Malconsorts 1er Cru has a light nose with red cherries and undergrowth scents. It needs a little more vigor. The palate is medium-bodied with sappy red fruit, a bit chewy with a lightly spiced finish.

- By Neal Martin on January 2023

2021 Echézeaux Grand Cru

Wine Details

Producer
Albert Bichot (Domaine du Clos Frantin)

Place of Origin
France
Echézeaux
Burgundy

Color
Red

Reviews & Tasting Notes

☐ **94**
Drinking Window
2027 - 2049

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Echézeaux Grand Cru is another that comes across as quite reductive at first, although unlike Jean Tard's Echézeaux this alleviates with aeration to reveal pretty brambly red fruit, undergrowth and light rose petal scents. The palate is bright and perky with finely spun tannins that lend a silky mouthfeel. Beautiful balance with pure tart red fruit lacing the finish. There is an excellent Echézeaux here, though it needs three or four years to show its mettle. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on September 2025

Albert Bichot (Domaine du Pavillon)

2021 Meursault Les Charmes 1er Cru

Wine Details

Producer
Albert Bichot (Domaine du Pavillon)

Place of Origin
France
Meursault
Burgundy

Color
White

Grape/Blend
Chardonnay

Vintages

Reviews & Tasting Notes

☐ **90**
Drinking Window
2027 - 2045

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Meursault Les Charmes 1er Cru has a ripe slightly more exotic nose: mandarin, mango and beeswax scents coming through with time. The palate is fresh on the entry with fine acidity and an attractive waxy texture, gaining weight towards the finish that does feel like a Charmes. It dispenses with its more extrovert traits as it opens in the glass and should repay cellaring. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on May 2025

☐ **88**
Drinking Window
2024 - 2034

From: Servants of the Seasons: Burgundy 2021 (Jan 2023)

The 2021 Meursault Les Charmes 1er Cru has a fragrant bouquet with yellow flower permeating the citrus fruit and hints of wild peach. The palate is well balanced with tropical tones. Not complex, but very drinkable. Don't think too hard about this Meursault and you will enjoy it.

- By Neal Martin on January 2023

Wine Details

Producer

Albert Bichot (Domaine du Pavillon)

Place of Origin

France

Pommard

Burgundy

Reviews & Tasting Notes

89

Drinking Window

2025 - 2033

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Pommard Les Rugiens 1er Cru has a sweet bonbon nose with macerated red cherries, strawberry pastilles and touches of blood orange. Fine definition, if just missing a little complexity. Soft and plush on the palate, what this lacks is Pommard DNA. Quite pleasant to drink with a smooth texture on the finish, it just lacks grip and complexity. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on September 2025

Albert Bichot (Domaine Long-Depaquit)

Wine Details

Producer

Albert Bichot (Domaine Long-Depaquit)

Place of Origin

France

Chablis

Burgundy

Reviews & Tasting Notes

88

Drinking Window

2025 - 2032

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Chablis Les Vaillons 1er Cru has a more evolved slightly buttery bouquet with exotic traits of passion fruit and pineapple coming through with aeration. The palate is better than the nose thanks to the thread of acidity. Spicier in style with white pepper and a dash of lemongrass, there is sufficient complexity on the finish. It's just the aromatics and a touch of dilution that let it down. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on May 2025

Wine Details

Producer

Albert Bichot (Domaine Long-Depaquit)

Place of Origin

France

Chablis

Burgundy

Color

White

Reviews & Tasting Notes

92

Drinking Window

2026 - 2040

From: A Vintage with Issues: Burgundy 2021 (Oct 2025)

The 2021 Chablis Vaudésir Grand Cru has a bit of reduction on the nose, although it conveys energy and seems well defined. The palate is fresh on the entry with a keen line of acidity. There is a veneer of oak but it is proportional to the fruit, rendering the finish balanced and focused with a dab of stem ginger on the aftertaste. This has certainly improved since I tasted it blind a couple of years ago. Tasted blind at the Burgfest tasting.

- By Neal Martin on May 2025