



AURIC PACIFIC

“selling wine with passion!”

Auric Pacific Fine Wines

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My Favorite Winemaker Series - Comte Georges de Vogüé



Soon after you passed through and beautiful site of Château Clos-de-Vougeot from national route of 74 (direction Dijon), you make a left turn, you will arrive at the "neat and tidy" town of Chambolle Musigny. I am always fond of having my petit déjeuner in the café next to Freddy Mugnier's Château de Chambolle-Musigny before I begin my day's long tasting. There is this sense of peacefulness that drawn me into this small town and the air is always smell so pure and fresh. Off course, my usual double Espresso always taste good here (not illy, but equally as good if not, better).

Anyone who is experienced in buying burgundy know that, the most expensive *village cru* come from the commune of Chambolle-Musigny. That in someway signify the high standard in both the quality of the wine and it's producers. There are a total of two *grand crus* - Le Musigny and Bonnes-Mares (co-share with Morey-Saint-Denis) and twenty-four *premier crus*. Among the most noticeable *premier crus* are obviously, Les Amoureuses (consider and sell like *grand cru*), Les Fuées, Les Sentiers, Les Charmes, Aux Combottes, La Combe d'Orveau, Les Feusselottes, Les Gruenchers...etc.

In general, the soil here is less fertile and predominantly marked by limestone as oppose to clay. However, the two grand crus, which is set apart from each other at the extreme end consist a higher percentage of clay. Since the soils are more pebbly in most of the area (mostly pebble-rich Bathonian limestone), the wines are generally very elegant and delicate. For me, wines from both Chambolle-Musigny and Vosne-Romanée share the most captivating nose of all Côte d'Or. Perhaps less spicy than Vosne, but definitely cooler pitch and more mineral nuance. Chambolle might not come across as rich or velvety like Vosne, but it certainly posed the same sensuousness, with more noticeable backbone and better transparency in fruit.

For me, the "Three Kings" of Chambolle-Musigny are, Christopher Roumier of **Domaine Georges Roumier**, Freddy Mugnier of **Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier** and **Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé**. Despite all three have their own interpretation on how a great Chambolle-Musigny should be. However, all are unmistakably wine of this distinctive *goût de terroir*. Among the three, Freddy Mugnier represents the purest with perhaps the lighter and the most elegant wine of all. My favorite wine of all Mugnier is his premier cru Les Fuées, which lies on the border of grand cru Bonnes-Mares vineyard. Year-in-year-out, Les Fuées is among the most consistent wine of his portfolio and it seems to take on his neighbour Bonnes-Mares' firmness and masculine personality, with more obvious backbone than say, his Amoureuses. Christopher Roumier's wines are often marked by the fruitiness from the prefermentation maceration and the partial stalk-included practiced also make them highly recognizable in blind. Roumier's wine is unquestionably the richer most concentrated. My favorite Roumier Chambolle, is his premier cru, Les Cras. Roumier parcel of Les Cras is coming from a more marly soil. Oozing with attractive sweet pinot fruit without compromising it elegance and purity. Since his "close to a thousand dollar" bottle of Le Musigny is too far for my reach and nearly as impossible to find (only 50 or so cases made). I could only adore, and imagine how that luxury juice taste like.

Estate manager, Jean-Luc Pépin and winemaker François Millet of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé complement each other well. Jena-Luc being an experiences sales & marketing person and having previously held the same position with Domaine Drouhin. He is undoubtedly capable for his job and largely responsible for the ambassadorship for this great historical estate. Millet on the other hand, despite his subtle personality (man of few word) has credit for his succession of former *régisseur* Alain Roumier (uncle of Christophe Roumier). Towards the end of Alain Roumier régime (between 1970-to mid 80s), de Vogüé was reportedly slipping in quality, making uninspiring wine despite their significant vineyard holding in this area. For whatever reason for this dark periods of de Vogüé. Today, Millet has completely restored the past high standard and resurrected the glory that once lost.

The great Henri Mayer once said,"when u taste my Echézeaux, the wine must be unmistakably Echézeaux, but equally, it must be unmistakably Henri Mayer". This is the case with de Vogüé. There is no doubt that de Vogüé has a strong signature in his wine and with

some training, one could possibly identifying them in blind. You can always detect the unmistakable succulently sweetness with almost confectionery-like sensuousness. On the palate, they often display satin silkiness and gentleness over the gorgeously textured palate. Equally, there are good underpinned acidity to keep it detailed and vibrancy. The exclusive balance is unparalleled and each *cru* posed a clear definition of their sites.

My meeting with Miller has always been filled with such anxiousness and excitement. First of all, Miller is very precise about his comment and almost, always, you can expect an answer when asked about the vinification, vintages, and his wines. He is also probably the most impressive wine descriptor I know in Burgundy. Very poetical yet accurate. He called the 2005 vintage, the "sorbet year". It has the concentration of sweetness and sensuousness, combined with energy, precision. He considers 2004 reds to be pure and mineral, especially after the malolactic fermentation, where the mineral component has becoming more evident. He once told me, no one know how exactly the acidity behave in the wine before the malolactic fermentation and each vintage, can be characterized by different mood of acidity. Example, he consider vintages such as 2001 as marked by outline acidity (contradict with it's fruits), where 2004, the acidity is more mineral. 1999 on the other hand, came across with more backbone acidity. When I met him in April this year, he continued to stood by his earlier belief that, 2003 will potentially be as great as some of the legendary burgundy vintage like 1947, which was also marked by heat. He agreed that, despite 2003 reds' low acidity (there is literary no malic acid and tartaric was largely consumed by the vine due to summer's heat), there is no "stewed" or pruney character found in his wine, which often the case with heat-stressed vintage. "In fact, our vine suffer no blockage of maturity during the drought growing condition and were all healthy, with good phenolic ripeness", said Miller. Despite De Vogüé and along with Christophe Roumier 2003 were among the most satisfying wines I have tasted from this unusual year. My early tasting from the barrel suggests that the fruit aromas are leaning towards more *confiture* with noticeable alcohol. Despite the subsequent tasting from the bottle shown better freshness and delineation. However, this is undeniable coming from a very ripe year, where their site uniqueness are largely overwhelm by the vintage personality. Another word, 2003 is a wine lover vintage, not a burgundy-lover year.

Domaine Comte George de Vogüé (Chambolle-Musigny)

- 19 bts. 2003 Bourgogne Blanc (previously Musigny Blanc) at 165 each (Burghound's 89)
- 7 bts. 2003 Chambolle-Musigny at 140 each (Parker's 88)
- 12 bts. 1999 Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru at 272 each (Tanzer's 91)
- 18 bts. 2003 Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Amoureuses" at 502 each
- 36 bts. 2003 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 502 each (Parker's 94)
- 11 bts. 2002 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 508 each (Tanzer's 94+)
- 16 bts. 1999 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 475 each (Tanzer's 93+)
- 8 bts. 1998 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 340 each (Tanzer's 92+)
- 12 bts. 1995 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 430 each (Tanzer's 93+)
- 11 bts. 1980 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 460 each
- 3 bts. 2003 Musigny "Vieilles Vignes, Grand Cru at 610 each (Parker's 98)
- 10 bts. 1998 Musigny "Vieilles Vignes" Grand Cru at 615 each (Tanzer's 95)

Georges Roumier(Chambolle-Musigny)

- 9bts. 2003 Chambolle-Musigny at 125each (Parker's 89)
- 8 bts. 2002 Chambolle-Musigny at 115 each (Burghound's 88)
- 11 bts. 2001 Chambolle-Musigny at 95 each (Tanzer's 88+)
- 10 bts. 1999 Chambolle-Musigny at 115each (Tanzer's 88+)
- 7 bts. 1996 Chambolle-Musigny at 115 each (Tanzer's 88+)
- 22bts. 2003 Morey-St.-Denis 1er Cru "Clos de la Bussière" at 148 each (Parker's 90)
- 12bts. 2002 Morey-St.-Denis 1er Cru "Clos de la Bussière" at 115 each (Burghound's 87)
- 8bts. 1996 Morey-St.-Denis 1er Cru "Clos de la Bussière" at 118 each (Tanzer's 89+)
- 9bts. 2003 Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Cras" at 196 each (Burghound's 88-90)
- 8 bts. 2001 Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Cras" at 142 each (Burghound's 90)
- 2bts. 2003 Charmes-Chambertin "Aux Mazoyeres" Grand Cru at 358 each (Parker's 92)
- 12bts. 2001 Ruchottes-Chambertin, Grand Cru at 255 each (Tanzer's 92)
- 12bts. 2000 Ruchottes-Chambertin, Grand Cru at 255 each (Tanzer's 91)

- 3bts. 2003 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 584 each (WineSpectator's 95)
- 1 bt. 2001 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 390each (Burghound's 93)
- 6bts. 2000 Bonnes-Mares, Grand Cru at 390 each (Tanzer's 91)

Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

- 11 bts. 2003 Chambolle Musigny at 102 each (Parker's 90)
- 10 bts. 2002 Chambolle Musigny at 105 each (Tanzer's 88)
- 19 bts. 2003 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Fuées" at 159 each (Parker's 91)
- 6 bts. 2001 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Fuées" at 138 each (Tanzer's 91)
- 21 bts. 2000 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Fuées" at 138 each (Tanzer's 88)
- 20 bts. 2003 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Amoureuses" at 348 each (Parker's 95)
- 2 bts. 2002 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Amoureuses" at 365 each (Tanzer's 92+)
- 6 bts. 2000 Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru "Les Amoureuses" at 229 each (Tanzer's 91)
- 24 bts. 2000 Bonnes Mares, Grand Cru at 190 each (Burghound's 90)
- 16 bts. 2003 Bonnes Mares, Grand Cru at 348 each (Parker's 93)
- 18 bts. 2003 Musigny, Grand Cru at 480 each (Burghound's 92)
- 20 bts. 2000 Musigny, Grand Cru at 352 each (Tanzer's 92+)

Bordeaux 2000

Recently, I was asked by a customer to host a tasting of Bordeaux 2000, in which, he will supply all the top achievers from this millennial vintage. Last night, the first half of this tasting took place in one of my favorite Chinese Restaurant - Golden Palace. Due the number of wines, it has already been pre-decided to split the tasting into two sessions with the first part featuring wines from the Médoc. Two Châteaux from each commune were chosen for our assessment.

Before I go on with my impression of this vintage, let's look at the following background of this vintage.

From start, the millennial vintage of 2000 is already destined to be a very special vintage. Like the millennium bug, it will continue to be the talking point for many years to come. One interesting observation from Bordeaux history, almost every alternate decade produces a great year. Like 1950, an excellent year for the right bank; 1970, great Latour, Lynch-Bages, Ducru-Beaucaillou (the best since 61), Palmer, Pétrus (my favorite and greatest Pétrus tasted), Trotanoy, Figeac; 1990 (exceptional year for both side of the river), and now, the consecutive run of year 2000.

From the beginning, 2000 vintage was never shaped to be a great vintage. Till these days, when Bordelais was asked about this magical year. They would never have thought that it will turnout to be this good. Many refer this as a miracle year!

First of all, the warm and wet spring had led to one of the worst outbreak of mildew in the region. It was reportedly as the worse outbreak of mildew since the mid-50s. One disaster followed by another with heat wave in mid-June and the overcast weather in July that failed to warm up the weather. It looks to be another mediocre vintage by many Château proprietors.

However, the weather miraculously warm up in late July due to a huge high pressure system stalled over much of the Europe, with warm temperature that lasted for the next two months and grape began to gain in sugar through photosynthesis, shading the excess water, thickening the skins (due to lack of moisture). The same hot and dry months however caused some heat-stress in hill spots and well-drained vineyard, with many vines showing signs of hydric stress. It was especially serious with gravelly and sandy soil of Pomerol and St.-Emilion. Ironically, the less ideal, water-retentive soils of clay and chalk were spared from such drought, producing none of those exotic, roasted aromas and high-tone fruits found in many wines of the right bank. The hot weather continued to last the entire September, which further raise the sugar and thicken the grape skin. Merlot was harvest in dry weather of mid-September, during which, rain pour between September 29 through October 1. Many Bordelais started bringing in their Cabernets in the next 10 days before the major rain fell on October 11.

2000 wines are marked by deep color (due to the relative high skin to juice ratio) and high alcohol (result from the high sugar contained). The best 2000 wines are among the most concentrated with record level of polyphenols that will ensure a very long-lived ahead. The acidity was however low for 2000, which was evident in many Merlot-based wine that generally lack the malic acidity. The

later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon is said to be the best achiever in this vintage, with sounding materials and high tannin content. To many observers, 2000 is a Médoc year, with St.-Julien, Pauillac and Margaux leading the way, making many outstanding wines. Right bank of Pomerol and St.-Emilion was however a mixed bag, with numerous of wines showing jammy fruit that were clearly made from dehydrated grape. Only those later-ripening, water-retentive soils were managed to concentrate their fruit through real phenolic ripening (as oppose for dehydration) and produces interesting wine for this millennial vintage.



< **Château Margaux**

My impression of 2000 Bordeaux somehow look to be a *déjà vu* vintage of 2005. There were many similar events that occurred in both 2000 & 2005. First of all, both vintages are marked by drought growing condition (perhaps less serious like 2005 and nothing compared to the destructive heat wave of 2003); Both vintages' Merlot has exceeding in quality with record high alcohol; Both vintages share the similar characteristics of deep color, rich and powerful palate, with huge tannin and underlying of acidity. Those are immensely attractive wines, yet remained classic long-lived vintage due to it's sound structured and tannin profile.

My first pair of Châteaux were **Ducru Beaucaillou & Léoville-Poyferre 2000**. It has become a norm for me to begin my Bordeaux tasting with wine of St.-Julien. St.-Julien represents the most elegant, aromatically pure, details and crisp acidity of all Bordeaux. Indeed, the Ducru under the hand of Francois-Xavier Borie was much similar to the style that was portrayed by the late Jean-Eugène Borie. Distinctively pure, elegant and symmetrically balance. Comparing the recent Ducru (by Bruno Borie) with 2000, is like comparing Maria Sharapova with Serena Williams in a tennis court. 2000 Ducru was so St.-Julien terrior-like, much like my other favorite St.-Julien - Gruaud-Larose. Pure red currant, red berries, with touch of Vosne-Romanee's spices. Ripe yet linear, very stylish, with pronounced mineral and burgundy-like sap. Exceptional balance and completely weightless. One of my best wine of the night. 2000 Léoville-Poyferre look more alien for wine of St.-Julien. Clearly much riper, denser with more seamless palate with almost sweet lushness. Less transparency like Ducru, equally, the details are well buried by the sweet oak (80% of new oak was used for aging). Despite attractive and coming across as more modern expression. It lacked personality and the dry tannin finish seem to be the result of fruit suffering from dehydration. The pair of Pauillac - **Pichon Lalande & Pichon Baron** were perhaps the weaker-link of all. Pichon Lalande (recently sold to a famous fashion house, Hermes) look to be in it's most awkward stage with fruitless under the relatively tough tannin frame. It also worry me with the relatively menthol, herbal like nose. However, the wine was silkily balance and quite pure without the intrusive new oak character. In the contrary, Pichon Baron has more cosmetic new oak sweetness. Good Pauillac's cedar nose with black currant. Not a blockbuster, in fact, quite stylish. The ripe slightly fleshy palate, with excellent outline tannin hold the wine quite nicely. In fact, a sexy juice indeed. **Cos d'Estournel & Montrose** were a better show. The clay-based soil of Cos also show more muscle and power than a more sandy soil of Montrose. Distinctively more earthy, dark fruit and the telltale smokiness of Cos. Quite a firm start, but it quickly give way to a lush, layers and curranty palate. Clearly more volume in this wine than the former pair of Pauillac. What amazed me with this beauty is, besides the lovely, velvety palate, there is this lift from the underpinned acidity that is keeping the wine so fresh and vibrant that, for once, I thought I was tasting the 2005. Montrose is another lovely effort, despite not being as masculine or bright as Cos. Showing more black currant, cassis, in a suave and lush palate. The gentle and fine palate almost reminiscent of burgundy. I particularly enjoy the precise and persistent palate of black raspberry and cassis fruits. The flight of **Palmer & Château Margaux** were among the highlight of the night. Palmer 2000 is all about finesse, subtlety and grace. This is not a wine for people who seek for power, richness and extract. Framboise, violet nose, yet is pure and pristine. Very fine and silk-like palate that nothing is instructive or over the edge. It has the similar transparency as Ducru, but perhaps denser and firmer. The will buffered acidity also make the wine tasted more chewy and at the same time, offer a more penetrating palate. This is a style of wine that is largely under-appreciated these days, which in my opinion, truly bestow what Bordeaux is all about. What can I say about Château Margaux? Clearly, the most aromatically complex wine of all. Almost Musigny-like haunting flavor of black and red fruits, cedar, leather, beef-stock, soy and mineral. Complex yet subtly sophisticated. On the palate, it has the sex-appeal denseness and layers palate, yet, is not entirely full-blown, somewhat restrained. Within the textured palate, there is this sense of elegance and refinement. The only Graves served on the nigh was, **Haut-Brion** and without doubt, the larger-scale, most massive of all. Not entirely in it's full force, despite my

best efforts of decanting them 3 hours ahead. Very intense wine, yet remained unyielding at this stage. Good earth and graves' mineral with steel infused black fruit. The tightly-knit frame with well sap and meaty palate almost reminiscent of the sophisticated Pommard made by Comte Armand. This is a wine that I would not touch them for another good ten years. An unusual high percentage of Merlot (51%) was the result of this fine effort.

I can confirm, 2000 is an outstanding year for Bordeaux. My early fear of the over-achieved Merlot that might potentially impart those *confiture*, roasted, exotic aromas (which was the case in some 2005) were however spared for this flight (at least, not for the left bank). At the same time, I do not find the alcohol to be excessive or potentially threatening to the balancing and delineation of the wine, such as what was described by Tanzer, with many wines have developed into more exotic, torrefaction, syrup-like fruits that is both chunky and monolithic (perhaps he refer more towards the right-bank). Despite 2000 is more substantial, it was for me, more on-line with 1990 and 1995. The sounding tannin combined ripe and dense palate also seemingly recall those of 2005 (despite, 2005 shown more obvious alcohol and brighter, cooler palate). There is no reason to believe, the exotic, *confiture* year 2003 has anything to do with the quality of 2000 and equally, 2000 is neither the like of 1996, despite sharing the same tannin frame and equally higher achieved on Cabernets. Many 1996 remained forbiddingly tight and unyielding today.

I hope the above assessment give you some idea on how 2000 Bordeaux has progressed. Before this tasting, many people told me that 2000 Bordeaux was impossible to taste. Look what has eventually turnout. My piece of advice is, don't always believe what you read or are told. Personal experience is the ultimate answer to your quest in the mystery of the wine world. Till than, see u next time.

Some offers from 2000....

- 100 bts. 2000 Bahans-Haut-Brion, 2nd vine Château Haut-Brion at 102.90 nett each **(Parker's 90)**
- 5 bts. 2000 Château Canon La Gaffelière, Grand Cru Classé St.-Emilion at 218.40 nett each **(Parker's 95 points)**
- 6 bts. 2000 Château Léoville Barton, 2nd Growth St.-Julien at 254.10 nett each **(Parker's 96 points)**
- 5 bts. 2000 Château Léoville-Las Cases, 2nd Growth St.-Julien at 504.00 nett each **(Parker's 99 points)**
- 4 bts. 2000 Château Lynch-Bages, 5th Growth Pauillac at 225.75 nett each **(Parker's 95 points)**

All prices quoted for per bottle in Singapore dollar. Prices indicated "in red" are inclusive of 5% GST.
Free delivery for purchases of S\$350 and above, otherwise S\$15 per delivery will apply.

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