

and La Croix Rameau. There are a further two in Echézeaux, sold as Vosne-Romanée: Les Rouges and En Orveaux. The *premiers crus* total 58 hectares and produce an average of 2,400 hectolitres per annum.

VILLAGE WINE There is a total of 105 hectares of village vineyard. The average production is 4,700 hectolitres. The appellation Vosne-Romanée covers red wine only.

The Grands Crus

ROMANÉE-CONTI

SURFACE AREA: 1.81 ha

AVERAGE PRODUCTION: 45 hl

PROPRIETOR: Monopoly of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Vosne-Romanée.

This most celebrated *grand cru* in Burgundy is surrounded by La Grande Rue to the south, Richebourg to the north, and Romanée-Saint-Vivant to the east. On these three sides it is bounded by a small stone wall. Merely a path separates Romanée-Conti from La Romanée, its neighbour further up the slope.

Roughly square in shape—a mere 150 metres by 150—and lying precisely in mid-slope at an altitude of between 260 and 275 metres, its incline of about 6 degrees ensures a perfect drainage without any grave danger of erosion and an aspect of marvellous exposure from early morning until dusk.

The soil is *limono-argileux*, a fine sandy-clay mixture, in this case feeble in the sand content, brown in colour and mixed with pebbles and limestone scree. For most of the *climat* this is based on a subsoil of Prémieux limestone of the lower Bathonian period. At the foot the subsoil is a marl formed by the deposits of small fossilised oysters (*marnes à ostrea acuminata*). There is a depth of barely 50 centimetres of surface soil before one encounters the bare rock. Since 1985, along with the other Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC) vineyards, the land has been cultivated biologically.

LA ROMANÉE

SURFACE AREA: 0.85 ha

AVERAGE PRODUCTION: 31 hl

PROPRIETOR: Monopoly of the Château de Vosne-Romanée, M. Le Comte Liger-Belair. Up to 2001 the *climat* was farmed and the wine made by Régis Forey, Vosne-Romanée. The *élevage*, bottling and marketing of the wine was by Maison Bouchard Père et Fils, Beaune. In 2002 Louis-Michel Liger-Belair took over the responsibility for the vines and the winemaking. After the 2005 vintage, the arrangement with Bouchard Père et Fils came to an end.

The tiny La Romanée, the smallest *appellation contrôlée* in France, lies directly upslope from Romanée-Conti and is separated from it by a path. The altitude ranges from 275 to 300 metres, and the incline is a little steeper, from 9 degrees upward. Further upslope is the *premier cru* Aux Reignots.

The soil structure, however, is similar: again *limono-argileux* feeble in its sand fraction, mixed with pebbles, based on a friable Prémieux limestone. The depth of surface soil, however, is much less.

Opinions are divided as to whether this was ever part of the Romanée now known as Romanée-Conti. The consensus seems to be that it was not, the *climat* being grouped together from parcels called Aux Echanges and Au-Dessus de la Romanée, some of which belonged to the Domaine Lamy de Samerey before the Revolution, by the Liger-Belair family in the first 30 years of the nineteenth century. The Liger-Belairs have owned it ever since.

How does it differ from Romanée-Conti itself? Or indeed from Richebourg, its neighbour to the north, the closest vines of which belong to the DRC? At its best it is equally perfumed, but it didn't, until the recent change of responsibility, have quite the aristocratic intensity of Romanée-Conti or the sumptuousness of Richebourg. It is an austere wine in its youth, and there is an element of reserve even when it is fully mature. But it is unmistakably

of *grand cru* lineage. Since 2002 it has become more aristocratic. It is now truly one of the great wines of Burgundy.

LA TACHE

SURFACE AREA: 6.06 ha

AVERAGE PRODUCTION: 151 hl

PROPRIETOR: Monopoly of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti.

Vosne-Romanée La Tâche is made up of two *lieux-dits*: La Tâche and La Tâche-Gaudichots. It lies to the south of Romanée-Conti and La Romanée and runs parallel with these two *climats*, being separated from them only by the newest Côte d'Or *grand cru*, La Grande Rue. Lying between 255 and 300 metres in altitude, steeper at the top, flatter at the bottom, but well-drained nevertheless, La Tâche encompasses a number of different soil structures: decomposed limestone of the lower Bathonian period at the top, thinly covered by pebbles and limestone debris, and deeper, richer, more clayey soil at the bottom of the slope, in parts mixed with fossilised oyster deposits.

Since 1985, as with the other DRC vineyards, La Tâche has been cultivated biologically.

RICHEBOURG

SURFACE AREA: 8.03 ha

AVERAGE PRODUCTION: 228 hl

PRINCIPAL PROPRIETORS: ★ Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (3.51 ha); ★ Leroy (0.78 ha); ★ Gros Frère et Soeur (0.69 ha); ★ A.F. Gros (0.60 ha); ★ Anne Gros (0.60 ha); ★ Thibault Liger-Belair (0.55 ha—*en métayage* to Denis Mugneret up to 2001); ★ Méo-Camuzet (0.35 ha); ★ Grivot (0.32 ha); Mongeard-Mugneret (0.31 ha); ★ Hudelot-Noëllat (0.28 ha); ★ Clos Frantin (0.07 ha).

Richebourg lies immediately to the north of La Romanée and Romanée-Conti and upslope from Romanée-Saint-Vivant. It is made up of two *lieux-dits*: Les Richebourgs and Les Véroilles-sous-Richebourg. While the aspect of Romanée-Conti faces due east, that of Richebourg inclines just a little toward the north at its upper end.

Lying at an altitude of between 280 and 260 metres, the gradient is similar to that of Romanée-Conti, as is the soil structure, a pebbly clay-sand mixture with a low sand content, mixed with limestone debris, lying on the rosy Prémieux rock of the lower Bathonian period.

Originally owned by the monastery of Cîteaux, the majority of Richebourg was sold off as a *bien national* in 1790. By 1855 the owners included MM Frantin (who owned the bulk of Les Véroilles), Marey (already a proprietor before the Revolution), Duvault-Bloch (ancestors of the De Villaines of the DRC), Liger-Belair, Lousseure and Marillier. As with La Tâche and Gaudichots, the proprietors of Les Véroilles were able to prove to the Court of Appeal in Dijon in the 1920s that their wine had been sold as Richebourg and at the same price for long enough to warrant this section being officially included within the *grand cru*.

Richebourg is indisputably the best of the non-monopoly *grands crus* of Vosne. It is fuller, fatter, richer, more intense and generous, but more masculine and long-lasting than Romanée-Saint-Vivant. At its best, it can offer an explosion of flavours: coffee and chocolate when young, violets when mature, all within a velvet-textured cornucopia of small black and red fruits. I count some Richebourgs among the greatest Burgundies I have ever tasted. "Sumptuous," said Camille Rodier more than 60 years ago. How I agree!

ROMANÉE-SAINT-VIVANT

SURFACE AREA: 9.44 ha

AVERAGE PRODUCTION: 233 hl

PRINCIPAL PROPRIETORS: ★ Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (5.29 ha); ★ Leroy (0.99 ha); ★ Domaine de Corton-Grancey/Louis Latour (0.76 ha); ★ Jean-Jacques Confuron (0.50 ha); ★ Hudelot-Noëllat (0.48 ha); ★ Robert Arnoux (0.35 ha); Follin-Arbelet (0.33 ha); ★ Domaine de l'Arlet (0.25 ha); ★ Dujac (0.17 ha); ★ Sylvain Cathiard (0.17 ha).

Romanée-Saint-Vivant is the closest *grand cru* to the village of Vosne-Romanée, its vines running down behind the church at the northern

couple of other proprietors. But the only wines I have ever seen are those of Régis Forey, of Vosne-Romanée, and Thierry Vigot, who lives up in the Hautes-Côtes at Messanges, plus a merchant wine from Nicky Potel. In their hands we have a sturdy beast, not without depth and richness and even concentration, but *sauvage*. It needs time.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Forey Père et Fils (Vosne-Romanée); Nicolas Potel (Nuits-Saint-Georges).

AUX REIGNOTS (1.62 ha)

The main grower here is Louis-Michel Liger-Belair, of the Château de Vosne-Romanée. Sylvain Cathiard and Robert Arnoux are the other major participants. Like the Gaudichots, which it adjoins—here we are above La Romanée—the wine has a touch of the rustic. But it is full, rich and substantial, nevertheless.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Robert Arnoux, Sylvain Cathiard, Louis-Michel Liger-Belair (all Vosne-Romanée).

LES PETITS MONTS (3.67 ha)

There are not many who produce this wine in bottle. Yet the *climat*, though small, is split between as many as twenty growers. One is the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, which sells its wine off in bulk. Véronique Drouhin is another: I have had some fine recent vintages from her, vinified by Maison Drouhin in Beaune. The Gerbet sisters exploit 0.59 hectares; Jean Mongeard, 0.30. Another grower is Robert Sirugue, who has 0.56 hectares, and who now produces lovely wines. The *climat* lies above Richebourg.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Drouhin (Beaune); Robert Sirugue (Vosne-Romanée).

CROS PARANTOUX (1.01 ha)

This small *premier cru* lies above Richebourg and alongside that bit of Richebourg known as Les Véroilles. Having been allowed to deteriorate

into scrub, it was planted by the great Henri Mayer during the war. He owned the larger part of it (0.72 ha). The domaine for which he was share-cropping, Méo-Camuzet, owns the rest. Mayer has now ceded his vines to his heir and nephew, Emmanuel Rouget.

This is a wine of *grand cru* standard, and first-division *grand cru* at that: full, powerful, rich, oaky and splendidly concentrated. An essence of a wine: brutal when young, and velvety, mellow and exotic when mature.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Méo-Camuzet (Vosne-Romanée); Emmanuel Rouget (Flagey-Echézeaux).

LES BEAUX MONTS (11.39 ha)

Sometimes contracted to Beaumonts, this is one of the largest of the Vosne-Romanée *premiers crus*. Though it lies upslope and adjacent to Echézeaux and is separated from Richebourg only by the smaller Les Brûlées, it has a distinct personality of its own, which comes in part from its exposure, which inclines partly toward the south, and in part from its soil, which contains marl and clay. It is a nice big wine, but nonetheless perfumed, full of finesse, even lush.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Dujac (Morey-Saint-Denis); Alain Hudelot-Noëllat (Vougeot); Bruno Clavelier, Grivot, Leroy (all Vosne-Romanée); J.J. Confuron; Daniel Rion (Nuits-Saint-Georges); Louis Jadot (Beaune).

LES BRÛLÉES (4.53 ha)

Divided by the road which goes up to Concoeur, Les Brûlées marches with Les Beaumonts on one side, facing southeast, and Richebourg on the other, inclining to the northeast. From these schizophrenic origins, there is nevertheless plenty of wine of quality: wine with backbone, richness and depth in a particularly masculine sort of way.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Engel, Grivot, Leroy, Méo-Camuzet (all Vosne-Romanée).

★★ Comte Liger-Belair

8.9 ha *en fermage/en métayage*. La Romanée (0.85 ha); Echézeaux (0.60 ha); Vosne-Romanée *premier cru* in Les Brûlées, Les Chaumes, Les Petits Monts, Aux Reignots and Les Suchots; Nuits-Saint-Georges *premier cru* Les Cras; village Vosne-Romanée in the *lieux-dits* Clos du Château (*monopole*) and La Colombière; village Vosne-Romanée; village Nuits-Saint-Georges.

The youthful Louis-Michel Liger-Belair is both an agricultural engineer and an oenologist. He began to take over the family vines in 2000. In 2002 he became responsible for the Reignots and the Romanée, previously tended by Régis Forey. But until 2005, part of the latter continued to be matured and bottled by Bouchard Père et Fils. In 2006 Louis-Michel took over most of the vines of a M. Lamadon who had been the estate's share-cropper in the village Vosne-Romanée.

The vineyard is increasingly worked biodynamically and ploughed with the family's own horse, Fanny. The grapes are de-stemmed, cold-macerated for a week and vinified at up to 32°C, and the wine is stored in new oak.

From the start, Louis-Michel has shown himself to be a sensible and astute winemaker: a man of real talent. These are elegant, finely tuned and very pure wines. The Romanée 2002 was the best Burgundy I sampled out of barrel in the autumn of 2003. His 2005s are even better.

Fabrice Martin

3.30 ha owned and *en fermage*. Village Vosne-Romanée; village Nuits-Saint-Georges; village Gevrey-Chambertin.

This small estate used to be known as Martin-Noblet, but changed its name when Fabrice Martin took over the vines of his parents in 2000 and started a serious move toward domaine bottling. There is total de-stemming and a short cold-soaking, but only a minimum of new wood, as Fabrice prefers to promote the flavours of the fruit. The Vosne-Romanée is the best of the three wines: a medium-weight, cool, stylish example.

★★ Méo-Camuzet

13.9 ha owned and *en fermage*. Clos de Vougeot (3.00 ha—2.75 ha exploited); Corton (0.45 a); Richebourg (0.35 ha); Vosne-Romanée *premier cru* in Aux Brûlées, Les Chaumes and Cros Parantoux; Nuits-Saint-Georges *premier cru* in Aux Boudots and Aux Murgers; village Vosne-Romanée; village Nuits-Saint-Georges; village Marsannay.

Jean Méo, civil servant and politician, and great-nephew of Étienne Camuzet, founder of this estate, was an absentee landlord. Up to 1988 the bulk of this domaine was leased out to share-croppers, the most important of which was the great Henri Jayer.

His son Jean-Nicolas (b. 1964) decided to take over personally on Jayer's retirement. With Jean-Nicolas initially aided by his father's avuncular genius, and still following the latter's methods—great attention to the initial quality of the fruit, 100 percent de-stemming, a few days cold-soaking, long *cuvaisons* at up to 35°C and plenty of new oak—the results are very fine here; my only occasional qualm is the amount of new wood.

Méo-Camuzet Frère et Soeur is an associate merchant company, specialising in Fixin and Chambolle-Musigny (*premiers crus* Les Feusselottes and Les Cras).

The last of the share-croppers is Jean Tardy (see below).

Mongeard-Mugneret

30 ha owned and *en fermage*. Echézeaux (1.82 ha); Grands-Echézeaux (1.44 ha); Echézeaux "Vieilles Vignes" (0.68 ha); Clos de Vougeot (0.63 ha); Richebourg (0.31 ha); Vosne-Romanée *premier cru* in Les Orveaux, Les Petits Monts and Les Suchots; Nuits-Saint-Georges *premier cru* Aux Boudots; Vougeot *premier cru* Les Cras; Savigny-lès-Beaune *premier cru* Les Narbantons; Pernand-Vergelesses *premier cru* Les Basses-Vergelesses; Beaune *premier cru* Les Avaux; village Vosne-Romanée, including the *lieu-dit* Les Hautes Maizières; village Nuits-Saint-Georges, including the *lieu-dit* Les Plateaux; village Gevrey-Chambertin; village Chambolle-Musigny; village Fixin; village Savigny-lès-Beaune.