

Domaine du Vicomte Liger-Belair (Vosne-Romanée)

2003	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	(92-95)
2003	Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière"	red	(87-89)
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	(89-91)
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	(88-90)
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Reignots" 1er	red	(90-93)
2002	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	96
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière"	red	89
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	91
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	90
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Reignots" 1er	red	92

Louis-Michel Liger-Belair calls 2003 "a very surprising and technical vintage. We began harvesting the 30th of August, which was a good thing because at that point the weather had begun to cool somewhat, which means that we were bringing in fruit around 25° C rather than well over 30°. I had a team of 10 people just to do sorting and I believe this was absolutely critical. There wasn't much rot and we sorted mostly for wilted grapes as this kind of fruit was so jammy that it already had signs of volatile acidity. We discarded around 5% from this sorting but as I said, I think this was *the* critical portion to discard. The good news is that even after careful *triage* work our yields were not much different than in '02 or about 35 hl/ha. Sugars were in the 13.8 to 13.7% range with pHs of between 3.4 and 3.5. I felt this was sufficiently good that I added only 30 grams of tartaric per barrel and with a dose that low, I'm not sure that it had any noticeable effect at all. As to vinification, I didn't change anything very much other than to limit the amount of punching down. Because there were so many tiny berries coupled with less punch downs, the La Romanée and Reignots finished their primary fermentations in barrel. I will soon transfer all of the wines to stainless so that they get another two months to harmonize and not absorb too much wood and then I intend to bottle in January. Overall, I actually prefer 2003 to 2002 though it's too early to tell if it will age quite as well." The Liger-Belair '02s are spectacular wines and all of them are recommended. (A Becky Wasserman/Le Serbet Selection - sbw@wanadoo.fr – additional distributors include Vinalia Imports, Camarillo, CA and USA Wine Imports for "Selection Pas Mal", New York, NY; Justerini & Brooks and Richards Walford, UK).

Now that the sharecropping arrangement with Régis Forey has ended, Liger-Belair is responsible for all of the vineyard work for these vines and will retain 50% of La Columbière, Reignots and La Romanée. The other half will continue to be raised, bottled and commercialized by Bouchard. However, in 2006, Liger-Belair will keep and market 100% of the wine under the domaine label. Thus, for 4 vintages, which is to say 2002 through 2005, there will be two versions of La Romanée (as well as the other two wines), which will make for interesting comparisons as only the *élevage* will vary.

2003 Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière": (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). Very ripe and spicy but not *confituré* (jammy) with rich, full and sweet medium full flavors that are complex and quite dense yet supple on the medium length finish. This is a generous, easy but serious effort that is easy to like and delivers fine quality. (87-89)/2007+

2003 Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château": (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). Even riper but here there is more Vosne spice mixed with black cherry and cassis notes and while the flavors are definitely plummy, there is no overtly jammy character. There is beautiful density and better overall precision plus a lovely undertone of firm minerality. In short, this is a lovely *villages*. (88-90)/2008+

2003 Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes": (from vines planted in 1945 that produced only 2 barrels). Plum, spice, smoke and sexy black fruit aromas merge into rich, elegant and beautifully complex medium full flavors blessed with abundant extract that coats the palate and culminates in an exceptionally ripe finish of excellent length. There is another dimension here and this is a delicious yet serious wine. (89-91)/2008+

2003 Vosne-Romanée "Reignots": (the Liger-Belair vines in this small vineyard run from top to bottom whereas the others are situated in segments; Cathiard is on top, Grivot in the middle and Arnoux at the bottom). Background notes of reduction, black fruit and spice mark the nose here, which is followed by superb extract of pinot which completely buffers the dense but fine tannins and somewhat mutes the underlying minerality at the moment. Still, this is clearly very classy if tight juice that will require 7 to 10 years to be at its best. Great balance here and this should age beautifully. (90-93)/2010+

2003 La Romanée: More often than not, the '02 notwithstanding, La Romanée is quite discreet and reserved on the nose when young and the '03 is revealing only hints of reduction and seductive but discreet Vosne spice followed by equally tight, pure and understated flavors of superb precision and stunning complexity coupled with the hallmark finishing austerity. This is a powerful wine of outstanding density and the persistence is nothing short of amazing. A great effort that possesses that rare 'wow' factor and this could surprise to the upside. (92-95)/2013+

Note: Liger-Belair suggests that his '02s should be decanted for 20+ minutes if you're going to try them now

2002 Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière": (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). A reserved but elegant spicy red and black fruit nose introduces rich, velvety and opulent flavors that are expressive with a rich, sappy, mouth coating and utterly delicious character and excellent length all underpinned by firm, slightly dusty tannins. This is very Vosne in style and extremely pretty. 89/2008+

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château": (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). Light ruby color. In the space of only 10 minutes, this changed dramatically in the glass to reveal subtle wood notes that frame exuberant, stylish and pure black fruit aromas and spicy, rich, beautifully detailed flavors that are linear but not strict and a beautifully balanced, precise and persistent finish. This delivers excellent quality for its level and is *très* Vosne in its personality. 90/2008+

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes": (from vines planted in 1945). A clear and unmistakable notch up and though the spicy black fruit is more reserved and less expansive, it's also more elegant and decidedly finer and more nuanced. The medium weight red and black fruit flavors are also linear and precise with simply gorgeous texture on the wonderfully long finish. Impressively stylish and graceful with buckets of velvet buffering the firm but fine tannins. In a word, terrific. 91/2009+

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Reignots": (the Liger-Belair vines in this small vineyard run from top to bottom whereas the others are situated in segments; Cathiard is on top, Grivot in the middle and Arnoux at the bottom). Curiously, the nose is quite ripe but slightly austere with an airy, pure and superbly elegant breadth of aromas that leads to punchy flavors are full-bodied, rich and delicious with more prominent acidity and a powerful, indeed even explosive finish. The structure is buried and completely buffered by all of the sappy extract and there is an appealing minerality on the extremely persistent finish. This is very classy juice that presently displays a subtle hint of finishing wood. 92/2010+

2002 La Romanée: Classic medium ruby color. This is a backward, tight and reserved wine with an adroit trace of wood framing stunningly elegant and dazzlingly complex black fruit aromas that lead to sappy, mouth coating, powerful and very deep flavors of astonishing richness and length. But it's the seamless harmony and sheer class that puts this at another level. In short, this is a breathtakingly fine wine that exhibits exquisite balance and an almost spiritual calm – it will be capable of 30+ years in the cellar and 50 is not out of the question. 96/2014+