

Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair (Vosne-Romanée)

2005	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	(94-96)
2005	➔ Vosne-Romanée “La Colombière”	red	(88-91)
2005	➔ Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes” 1er	red	(90-92)
2005	➔ Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”	red	(89-92)
2005	➔ Vosne-Romanée “Reignots” 1er	red	(91-93)
2004	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	93
2004	Vosne-Romanée “La Colombière”	red	88
2004	Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes” 1er	red	90
2004	Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”	red	89
2004	➔ Vosne-Romanée “Reignots” 1er	red	91

Louis-Michel Liger-Belair told me that there have been a number of recent developments as he has taken over a sizeable property which will expand his exploited vineyards from 3.2 to 8.7 ha, a big jump by any measure. 2.5 ha are in the *appellation* Bourgogne, which he will probably sell under a different label than Liger-Belair. The higher level vineyards that are new *appellations* to the domaine include .6 ha in Echézeaux, .22 ha in Suchots, .12 in Brulées, .12 in Petits Monts and .37 ha in the fine Nuits 1er Les Cras. There will also be additions of .15 ha in La Columbière and another .60 in various Vosne *villages* parcels and finally a .13 ha parcel of the Nuits Lavières. Liger-Belair also noted that for the most part, these parcels contain very old vines that have low yields but very high quality. Moreover, in other developments the family lease arrangement with Bouchard Père et Fils terminated in 2005 so for 2006, the domaine will retain 100% of the production and commercialization rights for La Columbière, Reignots and La Romanée. Fans of the domaine will undoubtedly have much to admire going forward and I personally very much look forward to trying the new wines.

With respect to the 2005 vintage, Liger-Belair noted that “like 2002, it was hard to miss in 2005. If you did, you should probably consider another line of work. In my view, maturities were ideal because even though the growing season was relatively dry, we had just enough moisture at just the right times, which is to say when the vines needed the water most without falling over into excess the way for example many young vines did in 2003. And while it was warm, the weather was rarely really hot and often the evening were relatively cool which enable the grapes to have this high level of ripeness, both in terms of sugars and phenolics yet retain excellent acidities. We began picking on September 15th as we already had sugars in the 12.7 to 13.5% range with good maturity levels of the structural elements so I saw no reason to delay further. Besides, the grapes were really quite ripe and I wanted to be sure that I had good natural acidities to preserve the freshness and help highlight the underlying transparency of *terroir*. The crop was super clean, which made both sorting and vinification easy. And we even had good yields at between 32 and 39 hl/ha so whenever you can obtain this level of quality for your raw materials and also get good quantity, you have to be grateful.” (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).

2005 Vosne-Romanée “La Colombière”: (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). Vosne spice and very fresh red pinot and currant aromas lead to racy, intense and precise flavors that possess solid definition on the linear, delicious and vibrant finish. Excellent quality for its level and recommended. (88-91)/2010+

2005 Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”: (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). A floral nose resplendent with violet, Vosne spice and black currant that is both ripe and very pure combines with delicious, precise and sweet flavors that display ample minerality, all wrapped in an understated and beautifully balanced finish. Again, terrific quality at this level and highly recommended. (89-92)/2011+

2005 Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes”: (from vines planted in 1945). Moderate reduction cannot fully hide the beautiful mix of red and black pinot fruit aromas nuanced by hints of smoke, earth and underbrush that merge into textured and layered medium full flavors that possess plenty of underlying material and a punchy finish. This is quite backward at the moment and will clearly benefit from a few more months of *élevage*. (90-92)/2012+

2005 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). Here there is only a trace of reduction with much airier and more elegant floral notes of rose petal and violet aromas plus sweet blue and black pinot fruit notes that can also be found on the mineral-suffused flavors that are precise, linear, focused and cool on the chiseled and beautifully long finish. I very much like this and while it's less generous than the Chaumes, it's classier. (91-93)/2013+

2005 La Romanée: A positively kaleidoscopic and utterly knockout nose featuring exuberant Vosne-style spicy black fruit and a panoply of underlying nuances including anise, clove, minerals, underbrush, warm earth and smoke introduce much more reserved, even cool medium full flavors that are like silk on the palate though the hugely long finish tightens up in a real rush. This is really quite fine and less youthfully austere than it usually is at this early stage. A stunner with that wonderful character of inner mouth perfume that the great wines always have and built for the long haul. (94-96)/2017+

2004 Vosne-Romanée “La Colombière”: (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). A very fresh, bright and pretty nose of black and spicy pinot fruit that leads to reserved but rich, sweet and textured flavors culminating in a dusty, mouth coating and punchy finish. This is beautifully balanced and while not overly complex just now, this aspect may develop with time in bottle. 88/2009+

2004 Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”: (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). A clear step up in aromatic elegance with really lovely and airy red pinot fruit laced with spice, herbal and earth tones that resemble a fine Chambolle in their delicateness. The middle weight flavors are also quite fine with an underlying minerality and a linear, pure and persistent finish that is most impressive. This is an excellent *villages* level wine and one that should reward 3 to 5 years in the cellar first. 89/2010+

2004 Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes”: (from vines planted in 1945). This isn't necessarily more elegant but there's more underlying material. This is perfumed and notably pure with spicy dark berry fruit aromas that lead to textured, sweet and moderately structured medium full flavors that are very Vosne in style. This is one gorgeous wine that also possesses a linear, detailed and transparent finish that just goes on and on. A terrific '04 where the only nit is the barest hint of SO₂ on the nose that is likely to be absorbed with a year or two more in bottle. 90/2011+

2004 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). A gentle hint of wood frames exuberantly ripe, spicy and exceptionally elegant black pinot fruit with obvious mineral and floral notes that merge seamlessly into edgy, pure and superbly well delineated middle weight flavors that possess near perfect balance on the linear, pure and crystalline finish. This is seriously classy juice with a certain coolness to it. In sum, really a lovely effort. 91/2012+

2004 La Romanée: Like the 2005, this is blessed with an absolutely stunning nose that is genuinely kaleidoscopic in its breadth and complexity featuring black spice, earth, underbrush, crushed herbs, hints of Asian spices, soy and hoisin. In certain important aspects, this quite resembles the Reignots, particularly the cool personality because even though the nose is amazingly expressive, the flavors sit back and wait for you to come to them. I like the texture here and together with the powerful, sappy and unbelievable length, this makes a serious palate impression. 93/2014+