

The Burgundy Report

THE 2005'S FROM ALBERT BICHOT - WHITE WINES

Maison Albert Bichot continue to go from strength to strength. Yields are ever-so-slowly reducing and the team are improving their wines throughout the range. The wines that follow were presented in Beaune at the end of February 2007.

What impressed me most about these wines was the overall lack of any maker's signature, just seriously presented, more than occasionally wonderful wines - in particular there was none of that 'almost too sweet' impression that some producer's 2005s' show. About 3 weeks later as I was writing up my notes the memory of some of these wines came back to me such that I still had the impression that I could taste some of them !

DOMAINE LONG-DEPAQUIT

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis 1er Cru 'Les Vaillons'

The number of bottles of this cuvée is reducing as the younger vines are now regularly going into a separate '1er cru' cuvée. This left-bank wine is a mix of parcels focusing mainly on Epinottes and Séchet. The nose is understated and focused, the palate is sweet, with rather well concentrated flavours and a nice flavourful fruit-driven length. It's a very nice wine - and always a very well priced bottling - but in this vintage, doesn't really shout 'Chablis!' to me.

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis 1er Cru 'Les Vaucoupins'

This right-bank cuvée has a lovely, more mineral nose with accents of citrus fruit. The palate seems similarly concentrated to the Vaillons but everything is delivered in a much more mineral fashion. Philippe quotes «as Vaillons starts to die Vaucoupins starts to wake». This is my style of Chablis, it is mineral, it is understatedly intense and has lovely acidity breaking across the palate into the finish. Excellent!

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis Grand Cru 'Les Blanchots'

A nose of faint spice and deep, ripe, melon-infused fruit. The sweet palate is bathed in complex and rich fruit flavours. The texture is excellent - the overall impression being borderline rich, the acidity just about achieves sufficient balance. It's an impressive effort.

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis Grand Cru 'Les Clos'

A more mineral rather than sweet nose - quite understated with faint brioche and hints of citrus. Likewise the palate displays understated power and real minerality - super depth. What fruit shows itself is very ripe but pretty much hidden under the structure. Really fine acidity pushes a wonderful length. Really excellent.

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis Grand Cru 'Les Vaudésirs'

The nose starts wide but with limited depth, only slowly in the glass does it reach deeper. Even after the 'Clos' this seems more mineral again, very, very long too. The waves of flavour just keep washing over the palate. This is a really successful blend of richness, power and minerality bound to a wonderfully ebullient personality - I loved it.

2005 Long-Depaquit, Chablis Grand Cru 'Moutonne'

The nose is quite dense, riper and more fruit driven than the Vaudésir. The palate is richer and also a little sweeter than that wine - still with the minerality for super Chablis though. It's a real mouthful of wine, intense yet presented in a more refined fashion than the 'wall of flavour' offered by the Vaudésir. The length impresses terribly. The domaine thinks that the gap between this wine and the others is the widest they have ever seen.

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MAISON ALBERT BICHOT

2005 Albert Bichot, Bourgogne Chardonnay 'Vieilles Vignes'

The nose is nicely mineral and high-toned. Very 2005 in its richness and good texture, but the flavour profile is more savoury than the sweet, sweet, sweet vernacular of the vintage. The 20% oak used in its élevage can only be seen on the flavour of the finish. In terms of the team's aim, I think this is a bulls-eye.

DOMAINE DU PAVILLON

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Meursault

A high-toned nose of quite understated depth. After the subdued nose the palate impresses with its volume and its forward presentation. There is good width and a nice (small) extra dimension on the mid-palate before the good acidity takes you into the reasonable finish. Quite nice and should only get better as it recovers from bottling.

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Meursault 1er Cru 'Les Charmes'

A wide and deep nose - very forward with hints of butterscotch. Really nice freshness on the palate from very good acidity for a 2005. Perhaps some of the fireworks on the palate are down to a hint of petillance but there's a lovely, very, very long and creamy finish. This is a super, super wine.

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Beaune 1er Cru 'Clos des Mouches'

The nose is rather similar to the villages Meursault, understated and precise. Broad-shouldered, rather simple flavours only hint at the concentrated base. There is good acidity providing a very nice balance, but today this wine showed little.

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru

The nose shows density but is quite tight. Hints of pear fruit begin to show themselves as the nose slowly becomes more expressive. This is another wine where the concentration has a rather savoury edge. The mis-palate intensity when couples with the gushing acidity makes this almost too intense to keep in the mouth. Equally long as the Meursault Charmes but with a much more mineral impression. A super wine.

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THE 2005'S FROM ALBERT BICHOT - RED WINES

MAISON ALBERT BICHOT

2005 Albert Bichot, Bourgogne Pinot Noir 'Vieilles Vignes'

Only made from grapes - no must or part-finished wine. Medium, medium-plus cherry red. High-toned, quite precise fruit on the nose - cherry compote. Lots of fresh fruit flavour here. The tannins have some grain and 'grab' your mouth with a little astringency - but they are quite ripe and playful. Whilst there is an almost Beaujolais aspect to the fruit, this is a great wine at its very low price point.

2005 Albert Bichot, Santenay 'Les Charmes'

This is the first vinification chez Bichot. Medium-plus colour. The nose is deep and fresh, supported by sweet cherry fruit. Soft and sweet with good concentration. The tannins show a little grain and grab but melt away in the finish. This is a very good mouthful of pure pinot fruit that I expect should offer excellent value.

DOMAINE DU PAVILLON

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Pommard 'Clos des Ursulines'

Quite deep colour. The nose is dense and a little tight - it needs a few minutes in the glass before showing its fruit. A soft and sweet entry; the flavours expand quickly across the mid-palate - lots of balance here. There are plenty of tannins, but they melt well in the finish. This is a very tasty and fun wine.

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Pommard 1er Cru 'Les Rugiens'

A deep colour to match a deep nose. There's plenty of minerality and submerged black-skinned fruit - it almost seems like two wines in the mouth; fresh, concentrated, lovely fruit slips between lots and lots of tannin. The tannin melts very well into a superbly long finish. This wine seems on one hand understated, on the other a bit of a monster, but certainly never brutal. This is very, very impressive.

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Aloxe-Corton 1er Cru 'Clos des Maréchaudes'

Almost opaque. A little too much reduction on the nose to get at what lies below - I didn't stay long enough with the glass to get more. Very well textured with floods of flavour running alongside very good acidity. There is so much joie-de-vivre here - this is the perfect example why I often buy Aloxe to drink young!

2005 Domaine du Pavillon, Corton Grand Cru 'Clos des Maréchaudes'

Again this is pretty-much opaque in colour. An understated nose with a dense, brooding base - just a little too tight for picking components. Really excellent fruit - super. The tannins are well managed and the length is again super but very understated. Just knock-out fruit quality here.

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THE 2005'S FROM ALBERT BICHOT - RED WINES

DOMAINE DU FRANTIN

2005 Domaine du Clos Frantin, Echezeaux Grand Cru

Medium, medium-plus cherry red. A wide and rather subtle nose showing hints of earth. The palate is lithe and a little tannic. Good acidity and superbly wide, creamy complex flavours that go on and on. This does not have the density of the wines that follow but it's a marvel in a glass and highly recommended!

2005 Domaine du Clos Frantin, Grands-Echezeaux Grand Cru

Medium-plus cherry red colour. The nose starts quite animale, taking quite some time to subside leaving only the most subtle of dark-skinned fruit aromas. There is a lot of wine here; ragged, chewy tannins leave little room for elegance, but you are left with quite profound, complex wine that bursts across the palate with red and black fruit flavours into the very long finish.

2005 Domaine du Clos Frantin, Clos de Vougeot Grand Cru

Medium-plus colour. The nose is very fine; high-toned, linear with delicate red and black fruits. Executive packaging on the palate - good fruit, plenty of tannin, quite some extension into the finish - an almost haunting finish. Not even vaguely austere, just very, very classy. Bravo.

2005 Domaine du Clos Frantin, Chambertin Grand Cru

Medium-plus colour. The nose is impressive with mineral and faintly animale notes mingling with dark fruit - very complex. Concentrated fruit magnificently covers the tannin. Linear entry to the palate, only subtly widening into the mid-palate before impressively bursting into the multi-dimensional finish. Wow! And I thought the Clos de Vougeot was good - this is fantastic quality.

2005 Domaine du Clos Frantin, Richebourg Grand Cru

After the frankly brilliant wines that preceded this, unfortunately we didn't quite finish with a bang - this was rather unknit and apparently needs some time to settle: Deeply coloured. The nose at first is a little uninspiring - wide but ill-defined - slowly it improves and provides a little coffee depth. The palate is lithe with fairly well covered tannin, but it's the cream-edged fruit that impresses the most - certainly the most striking of any wine here. The length is also, frankly, superb, but overall this is a wine today of parts and potential rather than cohesion. I'd happily drive some distance to taste it again once it's settled down though!