

# Burgundy Overview

A funny thing happened to the name of this region (and its sub region Chablis) in the United States. It was used to mean generic jug wines, and too many people still associate the name with low quality wines. The truth is quite the opposite, this is one of the greatest regions in France. Burgundy has a deserved reputation as well: It is difficult to learn. The many vineyards and subtle distinctions can make even the most confident wine lover, weak in the knees. It is expensive, almost always, and worth the price only occasionally, and great only rarely. When it is great though, Burgundy is my favorite wine in the world.

Cool with a long growing region, this difficult region is home to the equally difficult red wine grape Pinot Noir. The wines from Burgundy range from very rich and intense reds in the north, to lighter reds and heavy whites in the middle and light whites and few reds in the south.

*Grapes* - Pinot Noir for Reds. Chardonnay for whites.

## *Sub Regions*

In the north we have the region of Cote d'Or and the south the Maconnaise. There is also the exceptional white wine region of Chablis far to the north west, and unattached to the rest of Burgundy.

The Cote d'Or is further divided into the northern Cote de Nuits, primarily reds, and the Cote de Beaune with its famous whites and lighter reds.

The latitude of the Côte de Nuits doesn't encourage a particularly early harvest. On the other hand, its perfect aspect gives the area the aptitude to produce outstanding red wines.

The Nuits -Saint-Georges Appellation wines come from the communes of Nuits-Saint-Georges, and Premeaux-Prissey. The soil is essentially chalky clay on a Jurassic formation

## *Character of the Wines*

The Nuits -Saint-Georges wines nearly always have intense dark red colour. The bouquet is powerful and complex : blending cherry, blackcurrant, fur, truffle and, quite often, spices.

These wines are among the most tannic of the Burgundies. The harmony between tannin and roundness makes these wines corpulent and solid.



## *Morbier from France*

The first wheels of Morbier ever produced were made from milk leftover from Gruyere de Comte production. The cheesemaker would press the leftover curd from the evening production of Comte into a mold and cover it with a thin layer of ash to prevent it from both drying out and attracting flies. The next day he would add the leftover morning curd on top of the ash. The result is a two-layered semi-soft cheese with a complex fruity flavor and a slight tang. The two layers of the cheese have slightly different flavors, with the layer from the evening milking tasting fruitier than that from the morning milking. The ash not only separates the two layers of the cheese, it also serves an aesthetic purpose as it makes a dramatic presentation. Morbier is made using raw cow's milk and has a complex, bold flavor. Its yellow-ivory interior has a smooth texture, wrapped inside a creamy-brown crust. The shape is round with sides that bulge slightly ; it has a horizontal black furrow through the middle.

Morbier (meaning "small market-town") is produced in the village of Morez in the Jura mountains. Its creation dates from the 19th century. Its origin was for the personal consumption of the Comte cheesemakers. The cheese is uncooked and pressed, and allowed to mature for two months. It is then brushed with salty water. The production of this cheese is protected by a special label from the Franche-Comte; it belongs to the AOC family.

Texture: During the maturing period, the cheese develops a natural fine rind. The pale yellow p $\hat{a}$ te is supple and soft when touched, dry and sticky at the same time.

Taste: Its taste is savoury and fruity.

## *Chateau de Premix Nuits Saint Georges 'Clos des Argillieres' 1er*

Here is a wine of complexity and ripe, silky fruit. Alain Pelletier produces a yearly average of 375 cases of the superb premier cru, a pinot noir having lovely aromas that, with age, richly evoke the forest floor. Argillieres is arguably the finest vineyard of Premix-prissey, a village anchoring the southern end of the Nits-Saint-Georges appellation. Nits longevity is enriched by Argillieres' minerally depth and unusual finesse. Not fined or filtered, this wine comes primarily from of parcel planted in 1950.

Flavors: bing cherry black cherry black pepper chocolate cinnamon green wood raspberry smoky spicy tobacco

In 1983 Alain Pelletier took over the family farm, formerly a Chateau which burned down before the French Revolution. A decisive man, he immediately stopped he father's practice of selling off all their wine to negociants, and began estate bottling. He instituted a vigorous pruning program in the years that followed to improve the health of his vines and lower yields. In 1985 a major updating of the cave was done.

# Russian River Valley

The Russian River Valley, was formally established as an American Viticultural Area on November 21, 1983. The appellation is one of the largest in Sonoma County. Its boundaries roughly follow the low-lying flat plain extending south and west of Healdsburg, following the Russian River as it turns toward the Pacific Ocean. The coastal hills at Guerneville mark its western boundary. The largest appellation in Sonoma County in the Northern California Wine Country, with 12,000 acres planted to wine grapes, the majority being pinot noir and chardonnay, the appellation includes over 200 winegrowers and 50 wineries.

## History

Winegrowing in the Russian River Valley is built on a long tradition that has recognized the potential of this valley's fog-cooled climate and well-drained soils for producing some of the finest wines in the world. Early-ripening varieties of chardonnay and pinot noir thrive in this distinctive climate, as do zinfandel and grapes for sparkling wines. Four of five grape growers in the Russian River Valley run small, family-owned farms with 25 or fewer acres. Vineyards continue to share the land with farms devoted to sheep, cattle, apples, berries, market gardens, nursery products, Christmas trees and other animals and crops.

## Soil and Climate

The general climate of the Russian River Valley is characterized by warm days and cool nights. The presence of fog during the growing season is the region's single most important defining feature because it slows the maturation of local wine grapes in a characteristic way. Harvest in the Russian River Valley is typically 10 days to 2 weeks later than in neighboring appellations. The longer hang time for the grapes allows the fruit to develop and concentrate its mature character while maintaining its natural acidity. This, in turn, creates balanced grapes.

The soil of the area is extremely diverse-differing in composition and depth from vineyard to vineyard, and imparting a multitude of subtly different qualities to the wines of the Russian River Valley. In general the soils of the Russian River Valley are well-drained, as a result of the high percentage of degraded sandstone and shale in the soil, or due to gravel underlays beneath the soil. Drainage encourages extensive root development and less vigorous vine growth, which gently stresses the vines to concentrate flavor in the grapes.



## *Valençay Ash Covered Chevre from France*

**Description:** The cheese's form, a four-sided, truncated pyramid from berrichon goat's raw milk has similar characteristics of many other cheeses from this area, such as the Pouligny-Saint-Pierre, the Levroux. History tells us that the original shape was a perfect pyramid. Its shape was changed according to two stories. Napoleon returning from the disastrous campaign in Egypt stopped at the castle of Valençay ; saw the cheese ; in a fit of anger draw his sword and chopped the top off. Needless to say it was one of Napoleon's favorite cheeses. Another story is told that the farmers wanted to copy the steeple of the village church. The Valençay is made by allowing the curd to drain in a mould, it is then removed and covered with salted charcoal ash and allowed to ripen for about 4 to 5 weeks in a well ventilated cellar at 80% humidity. During this period its rind will thicken slightly and acquire blue marks.

**Texture:** The pate texture is fine-grained and cream.

**Taste:** Its taste is mellow and savory to the palate.

## *Sebastopol, Dutton Ranch, Pinot Noir 2003*

**Description:** This Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir is rich and complex, with excellent integration of fruit and oak. Notes of ripe black cherry, fig, plum, cinnamon and violet seem to leap from the glass inviting that first sip. Deep flavors of black cherry, red plum and toasty oak dance across the palate persuading yet another sip. The finish is long and alluring with enduring hints of violet and black cherry.

**Pronounced** - pee-no nwah

Pinot noir is a French variety predominantly from Burgundy and is used in the making of fine sparkling wine and light dry red table wine. Pinot noir is difficult to grow, ripen and produce wine from as it is extremely sensitive to variations in environmental factors, from those that are considered to be ideal. Pinot noir could be considered to be "temperamental".

**What does it taste like?**

Raspberry and strawberry from California. Cola spice, incense and game from France. Red fruits, strawberry, raspberry, plum and cherry are typical. Medium-bodied wines will show soft tannins and give a generous mouth feel.

PINOT NOIR is one of the most sensuously fragrant red grapes in the world, it can be a little minty and vegetal but when ripe usually tastes of raspberry or strawberry, if overripe, it becomes jammy. As it matures in bottle, it often develops silky textures and alluring undertones of game and leather.