

Robert Parker's The Wine Advocate

David Schildknecht :

Burgundy's 2007 Cote d'Or Whites: Hurry Up and Wait

American ex-pat and Beaune négociant Alex Gambal offered some statistics for his Saint-Aubin Les Murgers des Dents de Chien vineyard illustrative of the vintage ripening curve. Admittedly, this is a high-altitude and especially breezy site that Gambal harvested last. And of course, potential alcohol is only part of the ripening story, but to hear many growers – including Gambal – tell it, the evolution of acids and phenols was even more protracted. On August 20, potential alcohol in Gambal's Saint-Aubin cru was 9.1%. On August 27 – by which time the Pinot harvest was in full swing for most of those Côte de Beaune growers whose main crop is Chardonnay – the potential was only 10%. From there, it rose steadily to 11.4% on September 10 and 12% on September 17 when the fruit was picked. There was a lot of pressure from supplier-growers as well as oenologists to pick Chardonnay in late August, Gambal reports, despite a good weather forecast. He declared a ten day moratorium, "but if we hadn't pushed" the issue with suppliers, he insists, "we would have had an acidic, screaming mess." There are certainly some wonderful 2007s picked early, but that was only possible in favorable locations and with rigorous yield control and exceptional viticulture. For the most part, this relatively copious crop – for all of its head start – required patience.

The sole vintage to which growers with any frequency compare 2007 is 2004, and the resemblance is sometimes striking when tasted back-to-back. But their consensus – in which I concur – is that the 2007s are not only more generous but reflect healthier and more homogeneously ripe fruit. Even among Burgundy's top growers, those noted for candor admitted to relatively high yields, but their wines are seldom lacking in either flavor concentration, or a subjective impression of palpable extract or mineral density, either. Furthermore, the differences from one site to another within a given collection tend to be impressively delineated. You'll hear many local observers and Burgundy growers call this a "classic vintage," with particular reference to "minerality," to the reflection of differences between sites, and to the wines' refreshing acidities. (One might also add, in their alcohol levels reminiscent of an earlier time.) But while the euphemistic employment of "classic" for overly-lean or under-ripe vintages could often be ridiculed in times gone by, that would be unfair criticism when applied to 2007.

—David Schildknecht

Year	Wine Name	Rating	Maturity	Price
2007	Alex Gambal Bourgogne Chardonnay	87		30
2007	Alex Gambal Bourgogne Prestige	87		30
2007	Alex Gambal Chassagne Montrachet	88+		41-51
2007	Alex Gambal Chassagne Montrachet Clos Saint Jean	90	Early	52-65
2007	Alex Gambal Chassagne Montrachet Maltroie	92		52-65
2007	Alex Gambal Corton Charlemagne	91		104-129
2007	Alex Gambal Fixin Blanc	88		35
2007	Alex Gambal Meursault Clos du Cromin	89	Early	40-49
2007	Alex Gambal Puligny Montrachet	90	Mature	60
2007	Alex Gambal Saint Aubin Murgers des Dents de Chiens	91	Early	50