

Wine: Bargain Burgundy

The fabulous 2005 was a hard act to follow, so 2006 has been overshadowed

By Anthony Rose

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Saying "bâtard" to a Frenchman as I did a couple of weeks ago isn't as offensive as it sounds, as long as he happens to be a Burgundian and what you're asking for is a taste of his (horribly expensive) Bâtard Montrachet. So it was in mid-January when a host of Burgundy growers put on their best blousons and flew to London to show off their 2006 burgundies at various wine merchants' venues around town. The fabulous 2005 vintage was a hard act to follow, so 2006 has, as vintages tend to do when they follow great ones, been overshadowed.

The challenges of the more capricious 2006 vintage suggest that it will not be one for the long haul. If you're interested in stocking up on some relatively affordable (everything in burgundy is relative) house whites or reds for drinking over the coming year or two, now is the time to get stuck in. On the "relatively affordable" list, there are **the well-crafted, full-flavoured chardonnays of the Pouilly Fuissé en Carentantrant and Pouilly Vinzelles, Les Quarts from the Bret Brothers**, BBR (see note, below) and the stylish Pouilly Fuissé la Côte, £144, and Les Crays, £156, from Domaine Eric Forest, LW.

Still more affordable, the Domaine des Vieilles Pierres St Véran Les Pommards, £65, and Vieilles Vignes, £75, JB, are a steal, along with Patrick Javillier's Bourgogne Cuvée Oligocène, £120, JB, £125, Loeb, £129, LW. In the Côte de Beaune, the Meursault and Chassagne Montrachet producers Franck Grux and Marc Morey, respectively, each declassify some of their chardonnay into straight Bourgogne, and I found both the meursault-like Bourgogne Blanc, Les Grandes Coutures from Grux, £123, HHC, and the richly fruited Bourgogne, Marc Morey, £100, both good buys. For those with more elastic pockets, among the star white burgundy performers are Jean-Philippe Fichet, Drouhin Clos des Mouches, Blain Gagnard, Arnaud Ente, Vincent Dancer, Bachelet Monnot, Martelet de Cherisey, Etienne Sauzet, Hubert Lamy, Darviot-Perrin and Bruno Colin.

The year 2006 may generally be more of a white than red burgundy vintage, but this is burgundy, where generalisations are made at your peril. While good affordable reds may be harder to track down, there are in fact a number of fragrant, silky pinot noirs around, starting with an attractively fruity Bourgogne Passetoutgrains, £84, BBR, from Scotsman David Clark, a juicy Bourgogne Pinot Noir, Alain Jeanniard, £98, HHC and a spicy Beaune 1er cru Grèves, Tolleot Beut, £117, 6 bottles, LW.

Higher up the quality scale, it's hard to choose from the voluptuous Bourgogne, Cuvée du Noble Souche, Denis Mortet, £150, JB, a moreishly berryish Auxey-Duress 1er cru, Comte Armand, £180, BBR, the perfumed, red-fruited Savigny Lavières, Chandon de Briailles, £180, HHC, £183, CT, and vivid Aloxe-Corton, Follin-Arbelet, £180, JB. Among other fine red burgundy producers to look out for in 2006: Comte Armand Clos des Épeneaux, Nicolas Potel, Thibault Liger-Belair, Jean Grivot, Faiveley, Etienne de Montille, Jacques Frédéric Mugnier Clos de la Maréchale, Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair, Aleth Girardin, Humbert Frères, Georges Mugneret. Red and white burgundies are made in more limited quantities than Bordeaux and rarely appear on the secondary market, so judicious buying pre-release makes sound sense.

NB: Prices are in bond per case, ie add duty, VAT and delivery when wines are delivered, now or later in the year. BBR: Berry Bros & Rudd (01256 340123) LW: Lay & Wheeler (0845 450 1589) JB: Justerini & Brookes (020-7484 6400) HHC: Haynes Hanson & Clark (020-7584 7927) CT: Charles Taylor (020-7928 1990) Loeb: O W Loeb (020-7234 0385)