

Vinous - 2016 & 2015 White Burgundy Joseph Drouhin

From [2016 & 2015 White Burgundy \(Sep 2017\)](#) by Stephen Tanzer

Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin

According to winemaker Jérôme Faure-Brac, there was tremendous variability in maturity by parcel in 2016, owing to frost, mildew and *grillure*. Joseph Drouhin started harvesting on the Côte de Beaune on September 19 with their Meursault Perrières, “but mostly started two or three days later” and finished some reds on the Côte de Nuits as late as October 11. There was some blockage of maturity for Chardonnay but not for Pinot Noir, he told me. And losses to frost also ranged widely. For example, the estate’s Beaune Clos des Mouches, which has been hit hard by extreme weather events in recent years, was barely touched by frost in ’16 and enjoyed what Faure-Brac described as “a normal maturation.” The estate did more manual picking in 2016, as it would have been very difficult to pick mildewed parcels by machine. “It’s vintage of sacrifice,” he summed up, referring to the careful selection that was required to make good, balanced wines.

Potential alcohol levels in the 2016 grapes ranged from 11.8% up to 13% or even a bit higher, according to Faure-Brac, who noted that some of the wines are very ripe owing to the summer heat. “Some *cuvées* are fresher than others,” he told me. “In general, the ’16s had higher acidity at the beginning than the ’15s, but more of it was malic and thus there was an important drop in acidity during the malolactic fermentations even if the pHs are healthy.” Faure-Brac finds the 2016 whites “pretty classic,” but noted that some of the ’16 reds are showing a dip in the middle palate.

He wasn't wild for the sun-drenched 2015s at the beginning owing to their deficit of acidity (none of the finished wines have as much as 4 grams per liter). But the wines didn't change much during the secondary fermentations due to the lack of malic acidity. The lees were also very clean so Faure-Brac kept as much of them as possible, which he believes contributed to the ultimate freshness of the wines. They finished tactile and saline, with some evidence of tannins. “It’s rare that we have such a combination of richness and tension,” said Faure-Brac, “and of course it’s an amazing vintage for the reds.”

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Meursault (M) - (87-88)

(production was down 40% in 2016): Pale, bright yellow. Aromas of yellow fruits, nutmeg and hazelnut. A bit lacking in refinement but shows decent intensity to its soft flavors of yellow fruits and spices. Finishes a bit diffuse, with an impression of warmth. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet (M) - (87-89)

Pale, bright yellow. Pear and white flowers on the nose. Offers good texture and a bit more grip than the village Meursault, with supple pear and lichee flavors showing good ripeness without going exotic thanks to harmonious acidity. Finishes dusty and broad, with good lemony grip. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Puligny-Montrachet (M) - (89-91)

(these vines were less touched by frost than those in Meursault and Chassagne): Palish yellow. The most subtle and classic of Drouhin's trio of Côte de Beaune village wines, offering aromas and flavors of pear, white peach and minerals. Suave, dry and fine-grained, showing noteworthy intensity and grip without any phenolic hardness. Finishes with subtle rising length and mineral tension. With an element of youthful austerity, this village wine is quite classic in style. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Puligny-Montrachet Folatières 1er Cru (M) - (90-92)

Bright pale yellow. Delicate aromas of white peach, citrus fruits, flowers, menthol, mint and noble herbs. Quite saline and dry but rich, with lemon, apple and floral flavors complicated by minerals. Really titillates the taste buds on the energetic back end, finishing with subtle, slowly building length and repeating minerality. There was a bit of frost here but not much, noted winemaker Jérôme Faure-Brac, who told me that the yield was a good 40 hectoliters per hectare. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeot Marquis de Laguiche 1er Cru - (89-92)

Pale, bright yellow. Pure but much more closed on the nose than the Folatières, hinting at yellow fruits, subtle brown spices, lime leaf, lemon verbena, white pepper and a faint vegetal aspect. Broad and plush on the palate, showing an almost glycerol texture yet coming across as quite dry and unforthcoming, with a hint of apple from a remaining trace of malic acidity (the wine finished its malo shortly before my visit) as well as some primary fermentation notes and a floral nuance. Finishes with a phenolic dusty quality. Hard to taste today but shows very good potential. I may be underrating this *cuvée*. For his part, winemaker Faure-Brac likes the diversity of flavors shown by this wine, which he says is a function of the wide range of ripeness by parcel. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet Les Embazées 1er Cru (M) - (90-93)

(not touched by frost): Pale yellow. Pure, expressive aromas of pear, apple, spices, lichee, menthol and white flowers. Silky and ripe but lively too, with its ripe pear flavor conveying a glycerol texture without any excess weight. Finishes with lovely tactile persistence. This fruit was picked near 13% potential alcohol and was not chaptalized, noted Faure-Brac, adding that if Drouhin had waited any longer to harvest, the acidity level would have plunged even farther (it's 3.7 grams per liter following the malolactic fermentation). -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Beaune Clos des Mouches Blanc 1er cru - (91-93)

(Drouhin's largest crop in this premier cru since 2012): Pale, bright yellow. Pure but subdued scents of white peach, pear, white flowers and brown spices. Thick and fresh on the palate, relying more on its mineral lift than on its acidity for shape and grip; still a touch of apple here from the lot that finished its secondary fermentation recently. A very young, fine-grained, rather delicate wine with a subtly rising finish--and built to age. Drouhin harvested this vineyard from September 23 into the beginning of October. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Meursault Perrières 1er Cru - (90-92)

Pale, bright yellow. Aromas of *mirabelle*, dusty spices, crushed stone and smoky oak. Rich, plush, ripe wine with lowish acidity but good firming minerality. Thick, spicy and dry, finishing quite backward in the early going, even bitter-edged. This somewhat phenolic, brooding Perrières will need some patience. -- Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru (M) - (92-94)

(40% new oak; winemaker Faure-Brac noted that Drouhin's parcel on the Aloxe side of Corton-Charlemagne avoided the frost, which was much more destructive in Pernand-Vergelesses): Pale, bright yellow. Expressive aromas of apple, nutmeg, talc and fresh herbs. Densely packed, pure and light on its feet, with subtle white peach and crushed stone flavors joined by more exotic apricot and lichee notes as the wine opens in the glass. Not a sweet style but saline, penetrating and long; this wine appears to be closing down in barrel. Terrific potential here. - Stephen Tanzer

2016 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Montrachet Marquis de Laguiche Grand Cru - (92-95)

(production here was less than 50% of a normal crop but Drouhin benefited by being on the Puligny side of this grand cru as the Montrachet vines in Chassagne were decimated by frost): Pale bright yellow. Aromas of ripe apricot, pear, smoke and iodine along with a trace of apple from a lot that finished its malo late. (Drouhin began with three *cuvées*, one picked very early, one in the middle of the harvest and one later on.) Thick, sweet and voluptuous in the mouth, but with its intense stone fruit flavors nicely framed by integrated acidity. Almost creamy in texture and harmonious from the start. Finishes with firm, dusty tannins and terrific palate-staining length. This really saturates the mouth and leaves the taste buds quivering. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Rully Blanc – 88

Pale, bright yellow. Ripe nectarine and exotic spices on the nose. Plush and nicely concentrated for this bottling, with sweet peach fruit complemented by a saline nuance. A bit aggressive but not at all blowsy or fat, finishing spicy and firm. A lively Rully for drinking now; this wine clearly benefited from its site's higher altitude. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Puligny-Montrachet (M) – 88

Pale yellow. Very ripe stone fruits plus a hint of lichee on the nose. Less exotic on the palate owing to saline minerality, with the stone fruit flavors displaying slightly elevated alcohol but no lack of energy. Finishes a touch phenolic, with moderate complexity but an intriguing saline character. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Puligny-Montrachet Folatières 1er Cru (M) – 89

(bottled last December): Light yellow. Very ripe aromas of pear, peach and hazelnut, plus hints of acacia flower and lichee. Smooth, silky wine with ripe stone fruit and herb flavors. But a bit blurry for this *cuvée* and not in class of the 2016. Has alcoholic weight but lacks the floral lift of a classic year. Finishes strong, though, with an element of nutmeats, a balsamic quality and a touch of youthful bitterness. Still, this wine could use more verve. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Meursault Perrières 1er Cru – 91+

(aged in 40% new, lightly toasted barrels): Very pale yellow. More precise and complex on the nose than the Folatières, offering aromas of lemon, menthol, minerals and spices. Also much tighter in the mouth, with the very ripe stone fruit flavors framed and lifted by lemon and stone elements. For all its thickness, this wine is drier and more classic than the Puligny Folatières--more dynamic and less obviously 2015 in character. Finishes brisk, minerally and backward, still a bit disjointed and in need of cellaring. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeot Marquis de Laguiche 1er Cru – 91+

Pale, bright yellow. Classic scents of pear, menthol, mint and dusty stone. Juicy, intense, very youthful wine with dusty, savory minerality currently dominating its soft citrus and white peach flavors. Still a bit tart and disjointed on the back end, and quite closed in the context of this collection. This wine was racked last December and bottled in late February, like Drouhin's Clos des Mouches and Montrachet. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet Les Embazées 1er Cru (M) – 90

Pale yellow. Pure but reticent aromas of pear and white flowers. Lively if slightly warm flavors of pear, spices and flowers are shaped and extended by juicy lemony acidity. Still a bit closed like the Morgeot Marquis de Laguiche but ultimately more floral and easier to taste today, and showing more early personality. The Morgeot displays more power and is likely to last longer but this wine may have better early balance. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Beaune Clos des Mouches Blanc 1er Cru – 93

(bottled at the end of February): Palish yellow. Aromas of ripe pear, flowers, menthol, wet stone and subtle spices reveal a distinctly different, more smoky, iodiney minerality than the preceding wines. Rich, pure and opulent, showing a captivating sugar/acid balance and a touch of enlivening white pepper. Boasts a lovely combination of concentration and energy. Drouhin produced just 22 hectoliters per hectare here, owing to "the perturbations of the previous three years," according to enologist Jérôme Faure-Brac. Finishes saline, tactile and long, with a slightly phenolic character and firm structure. This wine is harmonious already, but Faure-Brac predicts that it and the Montrachet will be the longest-lived of the Drouhin 2015 whites. -- Stephen Tanzer

2015 Domaine/Maison Joseph Drouhin Montrachet Marquis de Laguiche Grand Cru – 93+

Palish bright yellow. Knockout nose combines very ripe pear, exotic hints of orange oil and tangerine, and oak and menthol notes, with a crushed-stone element emerging with aeration. Tactile, thick and fairly dry; less showy in the early going than the Clos des Mouches, boasting a firm acid/mineral spine for the year. A note of mandarin zest gives the powerful, gripping finish a touch of positive bitterness. With its 14% alcohol, this large-scaled, energetic wine is a bit inscrutable today. -- Stephen Tanzer