

The Ultimate Burgundy Reference

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Maison Samuel Billaud

Samuel Billaud noted that 2016 “gave us very tiny quantities but much better quality than I imagined. After an up and down growing season where we were seriously hammered by frost that cost us, at least in certain sectors, the totality of the crop. Seriously, I had a few parcels where I didn’t even bother to send a picking team. I chose to begin the harvest on the 27th of September and picked as fast as we could as the acidities were declining rapidly. Happily the fruit was relatively clean though there was some sorting required. Yields varied between zero and 40 hl/ha, which is quite a difference! On average the potential alcohols were around 12.5% though I did chaptalize a few cuvées. As to the style of the 2016s, they are less obviously marked by the elevated heat compared to say that 2015s. I would liken them to 2012 or a less concentrated version of 2014.”

Billaud remarked that all of the 2016 grands crus were still completing their malos and thus were not presented. Billaud also noted that his 2015s, revisited below, were bottled between September 2016 and April 2017.

2016 Chablis – Grand Terroir An overtly fruity, fresh and ripe nose reflects moderate amounts of typical Chablis character. The round, rich and generously proportioned flavors possess better depth and length on the reasonably precise and saline-inflected finale. This too should drink well young. (87-89 pts)

2016 Chablis “Vaillons Vieilles Vignes” A whiff of mineral reduction adds breadth to the mostly citrus and pear-scented nose. There is a better vibrancy to the more obviously mineral-drive middle weight flavors that also possess better depth and persistence on the sappy finish that really fans out as it sits on the palate. (88-91 pts)

2016 Chablis “Mont de Milieu” (from a .58 ha holding). Here too there is a whiff of mineral reduction sitting atop the ever-so-mildly exotic aromas of white peach, citrus rind, spice and enough classic Chablis character to be persuasive. There is notably better energy to the bigger, richer and more concentrated flavors that coat the palate with dry extract while also delivering superior depth and persistence. This is lovely stuff and worth checking out. **(Sweet Spot, 90-92 pts)**

2016 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre” (from a .45 ha holding in both Montée de Tonnerre proper and Chapelot). There is a bit more classic Chablis character present on the lemon zest, white fruit and sea breeze aromas. The attractively textured medium-bodied flavors are more refined but not quite as intense on the less powerful if equally persistent finish. It will be interesting to compare the Mont de Milieu and this once they are in bottle though at present I give a slender edge to the Mont de Milieu as the underlying material seems to be slightly better. **(89-92 pts)**

2016 Chablis “Séchet” A ripe but cooler and more restrained nose is comprised by the pure essence of pear, apple, iodine and lemon rind. The supple but highly energetic flavors possess a sleek mouth feel and ample minerality that really emerges on the clean, focused and attractively dry finish. Good stuff and worth a look. **(Sweet Spot , 90-92 pts)**

2015 Chablis “Vaillons Vieilles Vignes” (from Vaillons proper). A notably floral nose displays notes of white pepper, apple, lemon-lime, orange peel and tidal pool nuances. The succulent, round and generously proportioned medium-bodied flavors possess good sap that coats the palate on the juicy and delicious finale where a touch of bitter lemon arises. This seductive effort could easily be enjoyed young. **(89 pts)**

2015 Chablis “Les Fourneaux”: Notes of white peach, pear, citrus and mineral reduction introduce bigger and richer flavors that evidence solid power and punch on the bitter lemon-inflected finish. This substantially-scaled effort offers very good depth and persistence in a package that could be approached young or held for a few years first. **(89 pts)**

2015 Chablis “Mont de Milieu” (from a .58 ha holding). This is more obviously exotic in character with its nose of orange peel, spice, floral, apricot and discreet iodine nuances that are trimmed in just enough wood to warrant mentioning. The palate impression of the middle weight flavors is also impressively voluminous and rich though not so much that it’s ponderous, all wrapped in a lingering and reasonably well-balanced finale. Good stuff that should also drink well early on yet reward mid-term cellaring too. **(91 pts)**

2015 Chablis “Séchet” (from a .60 ha holding). A ripe and attractively fresh nose features notes of citrus blossom, wet stone, sea breeze and green apple nuances along with the same amount of mineral reduction scents. The attractively textured and very generous medium weight flavors possess good dry extract levels and a light minerality on the palate coating, intense and solidly persistent finish that also evidences a bitter lemon character. **(90 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Bougros Notes of smoky reduction presently overshadow the underlying fruit and soft wood aromas. There is also a touch of wood present on the big-bodied, concentrated and muscular flavors that possess good power on the rustic, saline and slightly warm finish. Once again, this could be approached young or held for a few years first. **(90 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Les Blanchots A pretty and attractively layered nose combines notes of white flowers, citrus, pear, iodine and algae. There is fine richness to the appealingly textured flavors that possess both fine mid-palate density as well as very good power on the saline-inflected finale where touches of wood and minerality eventually emerge. **(91 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Vaudésir (from a tiny .11 ha holding). Subtle but not invisible wood frames fresh, ripe and softly exotic aromas that display notes of white peach, melon and ocean breeze wisps. There is excellent concentration to the almost chewy broad-shouldered flavors that also exhibit a touch of wood on the almost salty finish that offers perfectly good but not exceptional complexity and persistence. Like several wines in the range, this is really quite forward and should be accessible in its youth. **(90 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Les Preuses Here too there is noticeable (though not intrusive) wood setting off the essence of white orchard fruit that exhibits more classic Chablis character than is typical in 2015. The rich, succulent, voluminous and mouth coating middle weight plus flavors that are perhaps a bit less refined than is usual for Preuses, all wrapped in a clean, dry and slightly warm finish where once again a hint of bitter lemon character arises. **(90 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Valmur Somewhat surprisingly, this is aromatically quite similar to the Preuses if perhaps displaying a bit better freshness. There is even more size, weight and power to the more dramatically scaled full-bodied flavors that brim with dry extract that confers a borderline chewy texture to the sappy and lingering finish that flirts with rusticity. This is exceptionally forward for a *grand cru* even though it will have no problem aging. **(90 pts)**

2015 Chablis Grand Cru Les Clos (from a very small holding of .08 ha that is supplemented by purchased must; 300 bottles were produced in 2015). Generous though not overbearing wood pushes the aromas of lemon rind, white peach, iodine and soft floral nuances to the background. Like the Valmur, this is a very big and substantially-scaled wine where the powerful and sappy flavors display good minerality on the bitter lemon rind-inflected finish that offers a bit more overall depth and length. This is still somewhat youthfully awkward but the underlying material is such that my sense is that it will eventually harmonize. **(91 pts)**

