

The Ultimate Burgundy Reference

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Maison Samuel Billaud

As I reported last year, life was about to materially change in a good way for Samuel Billaud thanks to the partial sale of Domaine Billaud-Simon to Domaine Faiveley. Now I can further report that he has moved into newly renovated digs that formerly housed the operations of Moreau-Naudet, who himself has moved to new digs on the exterior of Chablis. As to the 2015 vintage, Billaud describes it as one where "other than a less than perfect flowering we were cruising toward a very successful harvest. Then, wham, a few days before the harvest we got hit by hail pretty hard in several of our parcels, in particular in Les Clos and Montée de Tonnerre. Thankfully before the storm the fruit was super clean so while the hail definitely cost us some quantity it didn't unleash a wave of rot. Moreover, just to be sure that it didn't we began picking immediately after the storm by hand. Quantities were all over the place as one might guess as it ranged from as low as 10 hl/ha to as much as 50 hl/ha in our regional parcels. Potential alcohols were similarly variable from a low of around 11.5% to a high of 13.5%. The wines are definitely on the riper side and while there can be traces of exoticism, they are certainly less so in this regard than say the 2009s. The wines should drink well on the younger side but not so much that they won't repay at least a few years of cellaring." Billaud noted that his upper level 2015s were quite reduced and not in a position to be evaluated. He further noted that his 2014s, revisited below, were bottled between September 2015 and March 2016.

2014 Chablis Grand Cru "Les Clos" Generous if not dominant wood fights somewhat with the fresh citrus, floral and mineral reduction scents that once again display enough sulfur to warrant decanting this first. Just like the Vaudésir there is excellent volume and intensity to the powerful big-bodied flavors that deliver outstanding length on the extract-rich finish that really

coats the mouth on the hugely long finish. This is going to require ample cellar time if you wish to try it at its peak. **(94 pts)**

2014 Chablis Grand Cru “Les Preuses” Discreet but not invisible wood sets off notes of grapefruit, iodine and algae along with a hint of sulfur. The rich but refined middle weight flavors are less powerful than those of the Vaudésir but notably more elegant while delivering a fine bead of minerality on the impeccably well-balanced and persistent finale. This seems almost light compared to either the Vaudésir or the Les Clos yet it is so much more refined. A beautiful wine of finesse and understatement. **(93 pts)**

2014 Chablis Grand Cru “Vaudésir” Enough wood to notice and residual post-bottling sulfur renders the nose difficult to assess today. Otherwise though there is good freshness, size, weight and intensity to the bigger and richer flavors that also exude plenty of minerality and salinity onto the impressively long and complex finish. This is potentially really good juice that will definitely require several years of cellar time first. **(93 pts)**

2014 Chablis 1er Cru “Mont de Milieu” There is only a trace of the hallmark exotic fruit nuances of a fine Mont de Milieu; indeed the nose is quite restrained while offering ample amounts of Chablis character. The energetic and super-intense medium-bodied flavors possess excellent richness and plenty of dry extract that is buffered by citrus-tinged acidity on the impressively long and sappy finale. This is relatively generous to be so young and it should also drink well on the younger side yet have no problem aging successfully. **(92 pts, Outstanding)**

2014 Chablis 1er Cru “Montée de Tonnerre” Like several wines among these 2014s there is enough sulfur present to knock down the expressiveness of the notably floral aromas that display a well-layered mix of white orchard fruit, iodine and a hint of tidal pool scents. Here too there is excellent richness to the intense and markedly mineral-inflected flavors that possess plenty of saline character on the dry, long and seductive finale. This is really quite stylish and refined. **(92 pts, Outstanding)**

2014 Chablis 1er Cru “Les Fourneaux” A ripe and attractively complex nose also displays noticeable sulfur that somewhat masks the otherwise fresh notes of citrus, pear, apple, ocean breeze and a smoky hint. The complexity continues onto the rich, powerful and solidly well-concentrated flavors that possess excellent length on the balanced finish. This intensely saline effort is impressive and should drink well young and aged. **(91 pts, Outstanding)**

2014 Chablis 1er Cru “Séchet” A reserved, even discreet, airy and cool nose

exhibits notes of lemon peel, green apple, oyster shell and iodine nuances. I very much like the sense of underlying tension to the mineral-inflected medium weight and beautifully delineated flavors where the explosive finish clearly communicates that this well-balanced effort is built-to-age. Textbook Séchet that is slightly finer than usual. **(91 pts, Outstanding)**

2015 Chablis 1er Cru “Séchet” A ripe and attractively fresh nose features notes of citrus blossom, wet stone, sea breeze and green apple nuances. 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. Among all of these 2015s this is the most obviously mineral-driven of them. **(90-92 pts, Sweet Spot, Outstanding)**

2014 Chablis “Grand Terroir” This brims with Chablis character from the green fruit, citrus, oyster shell and iodine-suffused nose to the intensely mineral-driven middle weight flavors that deliver fine length on the notably dry but not really austere finish. This should be accessible young but also reward a few years of bottle age as well. I should note that there is just enough sulfur present on the nose to warrant decanting it first. **(89 pts, Outstanding)**



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