

# Bourgogne: Under the Radar

TWO WELL-KNOWN  
SOMMS—ONE FROM  
CHICAGO AND ONE FROM  
L.A.—TALK ABOUT **LESSER-  
KNOWN APPELLATIONS IN  
THE MÂCONNAIS**

by Allyson Gorsuch and Jessie Birschbach

**OFTEN WHEN WE THINK OF BOURGOGNE\***, we think of high-end, expensive wines. Although some of the best—and therefore most expensive—wines hail from Bourgogne, value wines pepper the landscape in the lesser-known regions. Bourgogne includes, from north to south stretching for more than 150 miles, Chablis, the Côte de Nuits, the Côte de Beaune, the Côte Chalonnaise and the Mâconnais. The extravagant wines of Bourgogne fall primarily in the Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune, in recognizable appellations such as Gevrey-Chambertin, Nuits-Saint-Georges and Puligny-Montrachet. The not-so-well-known areas, though, offer wines of high-quality at a fraction of the price: the hidden gems of Bourgogne.

*With research  
and well-informed  
recommendations,  
Bourgogne reveals  
several hidden gems,  
particularly in the  
Mâconnais, in the  
south of the region.*





*Wine & Spirits Best New Sommelier 2015, Arthur Hon's esteemed beverage program at Sepia in Chicago continues to garner accolades.*



*Two iconic producers, chosen by Advanced Sommelier Arthur Hon, demonstrate the quality and value of the Mâconnais.*

In fact, when we asked two reputable sommeliers, Arthur Hon, Beverage Director and Sommelier at Sepia in Chicago, and Matthew Kaner, owner of Augustine Wine Bar in Los Angeles, to choose wines from their favorite lesser-known Bourgogne wines, they both immediately named wines from the Mâconnais. The primarily white wine region furthest to the south, the region showcases some of the best Chardonnays at a great value. The Mâconnais includes the broader AOC of Mâcon and the slightly more delimited AOC Mâcon-Villages, which may blend across 26 named villages. If the grapes all come from one village, that village may attach its name to Mâcon, as in AOC Mâcon Milly-Lamartine. Five additional villages, offering aging potential and slightly more complexity, are permitted to simply use their village name: Pouilly-Fuissé, Pouilly-Loché, Pouilly-Vinzelles, Saint-Véran and Viré-Clessé.

During WWII, the Germans were sourcing wine for themselves only from Regional and Village appellations, strangely not from Premiers Crus and Grands Crus. Therefore, lots of producers in Bourgogne hurried to have their *Climats* classified as Premiers Crus; the exception was the Mâconnais, which was located in the “zone libre” (unoccupied free zone). Currently, the three Pouillys are in the process of obtaining Premier Cru classification, which should happen in two to three years.

The Mâconnais formerly had a lot of cooperatives, but more and more producers have chosen to go on their own now, which has contributed to a rise in overall quality. As is true all over Bourgogne, there is also less intervention today in the vineyards of the Mâconnais (fewer pesticides are used, for example) than in former days, which also contributes to the high quality of the wines.

The first wine chosen by Hon, 2010 Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine “Clos du Four,” by Les Héritiers du Comte Lafon, is a great introduction to the region as a whole. Twenty-six villages within Mâcon may append their names to the label if abiding to higher restrictions in yields and winemaking, improving overall wine quality. “Everyone who loves Bourgogne knows Lafon,” Hon declares. Dominique Lafon helped lead a migration of winemakers to buy land in the Mâconnais when he bought vineyards in 1999 near the village of Milly-Lamartine. Land is simply cheaper in the Mâconnais and that translates directly to a lower-priced bottle. Hon illuminates, “Price, consistency and approachability make the

*\*The Bourgogne Wine Board prefers to refer to the region and its wines as Bourgogne, not Burgundy.*



perfect sweet spot to be restaurant- and retail-friendly." He goes on to explain that because of the warmth of the region, the Chardonnay tends to be broader on the palate, an attribute he thinks the American drinker welcomes.

Hon also conveys the notion that there is a misconception that white wines from the Mâconnais need to be consumed within three to five years. Domaine de la Bongran produces an outstanding and stereotype-defying wine in the 2005 Viré-Clessé "Cuvée Tradition E. J. Thévenet." With ten years of age, the wine is drinking beautifully. "Does it improve with age?" speculates Hon. "I think it does. It just showcases a different personality." Vintner Jean Thévenet also does not shy away from ripeness, even employing *Botrytis cinerea*, or noble rot, to make an unctuous wine with tropical fruit notes. Hon suggests that it be enjoyed at the end of a meal, sans food. "Enjoy its uniqueness, with honey and saffron notes."

Pouilly-Fuissé, undoubtedly, holds the title for best-known wine in the Mâconnais. While always reliable, its neighboring appellations, Pouilly-Vinzelles and Pouilly-Loché, reveal relatively unknown gems. Kaner chooses Marie-Pierre Manciat's 2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles "Les Longeays" to showcase the rarity and quality of Pouilly-Vinzelles. The Manciat family has been growing grapes in the Mâconnais for over a century, but Marie's father Claude began producing wine in the early 1980s. Marie took over a decade later. "Claude was a non-interventionist—using neutral oak, staying out of the way of terroir," explains Kaner. Keeping in theme with iconic producers, Domaine du Clos des Rocs owns more than 30 percent of the vineyards in Pouilly-Loché; their 2012 "Clos des Rocs" Monopole bottling "is the flagship wine from Pouilly-Loché. These are beautiful wines that age gracefully," Kaner praises.

Bourgogne can be a complicated and overwhelming region to grasp, but the beauty is that it delivers wine for every price-point. Some of the most sought-after wines in the world claim the hillsides of Bourgogne as home. Alongside those iconic wines lie some of the best values in the entire wine world.



**One of the most respected and lauded sommeliers in this country, Matthew Kaner owns Augustine Wine Bar in the Los Angeles suburb of Sherman Oaks.**

## THE "OTHER" POUILLYS

### *Pouilly-Vinzelles and Pouilly-Loché of the Mâconnais*

Matthew Kaner is currently serving the Marie-Pierre Manciat 2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles "Les Longeays," by the glass at Augustine; and in the past, he's also served the Domaine du Clos des Rocs 2012 Pouilly-Loché "Clos des Rocs" Monopole. For these reasons, we thought he'd be the perfect person to talk to about these "other" Pouillys, for once, instead of Pouilly-Fuissé. Sporting a denim jacket and piercing stare, Kaner offers his breakdown:

- *Both of these appellations were established relatively recently in 1940. They're also very small. Pouilly-Vinzelles is 52 total hectares. That's 129 acres, and a 230,000 bottle production potential. Some wineries make more than that all by themselves, and we're talking about a whole region!*
- *Pouilly-Loché is just to the north of Pouilly-Vinzelles and even smaller. In fact, it's so small, wines made in Pouilly-Loché are allowed to label themselves Pouilly-Vinzelles, which is even lesser known, ironically. Pouilly-Loché grows a total of 32 hectares, which is a 200,000 bottle production potential. Consider that this production number does not take into account for the possibility of hail or frost, etc.*
- *The other thing that's incredible about these wines is their rarity to price ratio because of the size of the areas. The fact that this [points to his bottle] is one of 5,000 bottles that this winery makes from this tiny appellation, and that it somehow makes its way into my wine bar, and that I get to serve it by the glass for \$15 is crazy. Especially with the rest of Bourgogne becoming more and more out of reach for the price.*
- *Pouilly-Loché actually has a schist backbone and as you move south towards Pouilly-Vinzelles, you start to see the clay, limestone, kind of rich in iron kind of fluidity that goes into entire region of Vinzelles. For that reason, you might get something rounder from Pouilly-Vinzelles and more crisp and angular from Pouilly-Loché. SJ*