



Domaine Marc Colin – the 2015 Vintage

As reviewed by Neal Martin

The Wine Advocate #228 – December 2016

Damien Colin informed me that he had been taking English lessons in recent weeks so he invited me to conduct the tasting in his second language, rather than French as we usually do. I must say, he has a good teacher because he spoke very well. But it was the wines that did the talking, fluently translating the vagaries of their respective terroirs. A few of his whites had been bottled in August just before the harvest, although most of the range will be bottled early spring next year. "The 2015 vintage was easy," Damien told me, laughing at that thought after the trauma of the 2016. "After the high temperatures we started picking on 2 September. We thought that the fruit would be riper after a sunny vintage but the alcoholic degree was very correct in the end, between 12.5° and 13.0°. The problem was the acidity but after the malolactic the acidity levels stayed constant. [A phenomenon that a couple of growers had told me, including David Croix at Domaine des Croix.] The wines were less rich and fresher than we expected. We search more and more freshness and acidity, and we had a lot of that in Saint Aubin because of the limestone soils. The vinification was normal although now we are using more and more foudres, which we like because it helps us keep the freshness and does not impart too much taste of the wood. In addition we discovered that there is more carbonic gas remaining after the two fermentations so that means that the wine is more protected and we do not need to use so much SO₂. It means these wines have more energy. We use 30-40% maximum for each cuvée."

This was another very impressive set of wines from Damien and Joseph Colin, reaffirming their position as one of the best winemakers in the Côte de Beaune. As I remarked to Damien, I felt that their strongest suit is their Saint Aubins, whose limestone soils advantaged them in the warmth of the 2015 season, imparting the acidity naturally and retaining good pH levels. This was evidenced by the Chassagne-Montrachet that did not quite deliver the same race and nervosité. If you can find their Grand Crus, then you have my congratulations. As I mention in the tasting notes, they had the novel idea of commissioning a specially-made barrel with staves alternating between old and new to inhibit the influence of the oak. I thought this worked especially well with the exemplary Montrachet Grand Cru. Overall, it was a marvelous set of whites from Joseph and Damien Colin that are mostly strongly recommended.

2015 Domaine Marc Colin Saint-Aubin “Les Fontenottes”

The 2015 Saint Aubin la Fontenotte, which sees a maximum 10% new oak and 30% aged in oak foudres, has a lovely pine needle, citrus fruit and nectarine-scented bouquet that opens nicely in the glass. The palate is well balanced with judicious use of oak that lends this Saint Aubin hints of brioche and vanilla without impeding upon the terroir expression. After a couple of minutes, I noticed an oyster shell tincture developing back on the aromatics. This is an intriguing Saint Aubin that probably touches premier cru quality. **(89-91 points)**

2015 Domaine Marc Colin Saint-Aubin 1er Cru “Les Combes”

The 2015 St Aubin 1er Cru les Combes was matured in 20% new oak, but unlike others it does not see any aging in foudres. It has a more strict and linear bouquet than its siblings, subtle notes of wet limestone and apple peel developing, a faint marine scent backing it up. The palate is subtle, tightly wound but very balanced, a more nuanced take on the vintage with a very harmonious, spice-tinged finish that is an absolute treat. Perhaps this is one I would be tempted to broach in its flush of youth, but it will age well. **(90-92 points)**

2015 Domaine Marc Colin Saint-Aubin 1er Cru “Sur le Sentier du Clou”

The 2015 St Aubin 1er Cru Sur Le Sentier du Clou, which was bottled in August 2016, has a clean and precise bouquet that comes across a touch more conservative than other premier crus from this domaine, yet it delivers impressive focus and tension. The palate

is very precise and clean, understated on the entry but building in the mouth with wonderful tension and complexity on the finish, the salinity absolutely top notch. This comes highly recommended. **(92 points)**

2015 Domaine Marc Colin Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru “Les Champs Gain”

The 2015 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Champs Gain has a more complex bouquet compared to the Chenevottes, with intense citrus fruit, wet limestone, walnut and white peach aromas that gradually unfold in the glass. The palate is smooth and harmonious on the slightly viscous entry, generous with tropical tones from start to finish, honeyed and sensual. Perhaps it reflects more the growing season than the terroir, yet it will be absolutely delicious for a decade, perhaps more. **(90-92 points)**

2015 Domaine Marc Colin Santenay “Champs Claude” Vieilles Vignes

The 2015 Santenay Vieilles Vignes Champs Claude, which comes from vines planted back in 1901 (so they are genuine Vieilles Vignes!) has a vibrant, edgy, redcurrant and cranberry scented bouquet, hints of tomato vine and persimmon developing in the glass. The palate is medium-bodied with gentle, caressing tannin. This is one of the best balanced and harmonious of the domaine's 2015s, with a sensual and quite beguiling finish that lingers long in the mouth. This comes highly recommended. **(90-92 points)**

