

## VINTAGE TASTINGS - La Paulee, 2007 Part Two

It was time for the main event, and there must have been four or five hundred giddy people gathered in downtown Manhattan. One or two of dozens of Burgundy's elite winemakers sat at each table in anticipation of this Bacchanalian orgy. The long, army-style lunch room seating had to have about forty people per table, twenty on each side. It was a bit tight, and a bit hectic to get the seating straight and keep everyone together that came together, even at the same table. I saw a lot of familiar faces filing in as I tried to get my bearings and said my share of quick hellos; the event was so large and frenetic that I could not possibly say hi to everyone I wanted to, even if I saw them sitting across the room. I planned on doing that later, but that didn't work out quite as well as I had planned.

I actually did make one short round to the table next to us to say hi to Roy, owner of Cru, world champion Bridge player and all-around great guy. He graciously gave me a splash of **1990 Dom Perignon Rose** out of magnum, and we were off and running. The '90 DP Rose had lovely orange fruits in the nose and touches of cinnamon, strawberry and exotic kiwi. Long, balanced and dry, the palate had tangy citric fruits and a strawberry lime finish, but it did seem a bit tight and unyielding (**94+M**).

Bottles were previously taken at the front upon entering and put in a back room, attended to by one of the dozens of All-Star sommeliers assembled by Daniel Johnnes. By the time everyone in my entourage of ten or twelve arrived, I decided to take charge and get things moving and just get our bottles on our table. It just so happened that Roger brought a magnum of **1985 Dom Perignon Rose**. The 1985 was in a much better spot and seemed to be a better Champagne than the 1990 actually. It was more honeyed and full of white chocolate and roses in the nose and had a great palate. There was tremendous verve and vim here; the '85 had excellent vigor along with great balance and spine (**96M**).

That was it for the Champagne this evening, and a quick glass of **2000 Henri Boillot Montrachet** kicked things off since Henri was the winemaker at our table. The Montrachet had light earth, nut and smoke aromas but was a touch musty. Long, fine and gritty, it was very good but not what I look for in my Montrachet, at least at this young age (**92A-M**). That means both affected and out of magnum.

Ok, it was time to dig into our own wines, and Roger also set the table incredibly well with a trio of whites, beginning with a very rare **1978 Domaine Leflaive Chevalier Montrachet**. Gil immediately picked up on 'white asparagus lightly steamed and grilled.' Of course, it was, as Gil has one of the top ten palates that I have come across with an uncanny and innate ability to put aromas and flavors into words. Incredibly

exotic, it also had crazy honey in its nose and a decadent sweetness. In the mouth, it was very meaty with great texture and a rich, oily personality. The flavors in this very special wine were very kinky; 1978 sure was a great white wine vintage. I have always had fantastic experiences with them (96).

We continued the Leflaive procession with a **1983 Domaine Leflaive Bienvenues Batard Montrachet**. It had a similar style to the 1978 with its exotic fruit, although the 1983 was sweeter with much more pronounced tangerine. Again, crazy honey made an appearance, this time on the palate; "crazy exotic honey city" was the note at the time. The 1983 was very decadent and in a great spot (94).

The last of Roger's Leflaives was a **1990 Domaine Leflaive Chevalier Montrachet**. It got a "wow," for starters, followed by a great mix of rock, anise, spine and sex. Yes, the 1990 Leflaive Chevy made me horny, a veritable aromatic turn-on. In the mouth, it was pure, decadent wax and mint along with enough white fruits to bring sexy back. Rich, long yet still smooth, it was definitely a wine to make one bid over the high so to speak, and the pure minerals on its finish were divine (97).

A jeroboam of **1986 Ramonet Montrachet** made its way to our table courtesy of Eddie and the table next door. Again, exotic first came to mind, and its nose was full of yellow fruits and wild flowers. It was Big Mike's favorite so far, and it was young and tight out of jero. There were nice minerals, but the wine was a bit yeasty and suffered from a hint of morning mouth on its finish, perhaps some bottle variation out of the jero or perhaps just the fact that the wines were coming at such a blistering pace that it didn't have enough time to shake off some cobwebs (94J).

We went back to the Leflaive side of the fence with a **2002 Domaine Leflaive Montrachet**. Hubba Hubba. I believe it was Mark we had to thank for this wine, and what a wine it was. It was another "wow" wine, rocket science meets rock star. More wound than a Clemens fastball, it had super aromas and flavors of citrus skin, hazelnut, limestone, lime and salt. Still a baby, it had an incredible centerpoint, and although it was still a baby, it was still brilliant, a veritable five-year old prodigy great enough to graduate from college&with a masters degree (98).

A **1990 Comtes Lafon Meursault Perrieres** came from somewhere or another, and it was a bit yeasty, meaty and gamy with orange aromas. More confused on the palate, this seemed to be an affected bottle and given the competition not worth spending much time on it (91A).

The **1979 Ramonet Batard Montrachet**, however, was worth spending a lot of time on, with and reminiscing about all over again. Honey, smoke, benevolent yeast, lit match, corn, citrus and spine all combined to form a Justice League of aromas and flavors, here

to protect and serve by letting everyone know what white Burgundy is supposed to be. It had this sexy, dark and dank Hostel action, European, of course (97).

Wait a second, it was the **1986 Ramonet Montrachet** again, this time out of magnum. I hate it when that happens. Smokier and toastier than its jeroboam sibling, the magnum had nice spine, spine and a better finish. Its flavors were more wound, and its alcohol and acidity were more noticeable (95M).

Now it was a **1992 Ramonet Montrachet** out of magnum. There wasn't much good wine going around. The 1992 was smoke city, with honey, nut, toast and insane complexity in its nose. Coconut, yes that was it, coconut was there along with incredible spice and great complexity. Its acidity was huge and legendary along the line of 1992 Ramonet Montrachet, of course (97+M).

The last white of the evening, at least for me, was a **1993 Coche-Dury Corton Charlemagne**. The Coche had a great mature nose and was musk central. Delicious, round and pure, it had excellent balance as well (94).

That's thirteen notes and counting for those of you keeping score at home.

The red part of our program started with an insane magnum of **1969 Rousseau Chambertin** courtesy of The Don. I don't think anyone had their ring kissed more on this night of excess, and that's what happens when you are the greatest collector of Burgundy on Earth. The Rousseau had a spectacular nose, gamy and meaty, full of iron and smokehouse, a veritable Saw III with its gorily good cherry dust appeal. Spiny, irony and hearty, the '69 had great acid, great enough to make Dr. Timothy Leary proud. This wine was flat-out spectacular out of magnum and actually had tremendous fruit, something not every wine from 1969 can say (97M).

I slipped into the **1971 Rousseau Mazis Chambertin**, one of the eight wines Big Boy had brought. He and Rudy slipped in about half way through the whites, arriving fashionably late and fashionably dressed as well. The Mazis had a great nose full of purple wildflowers and exotic spice. Gil chimed in with cranberry juice; very clean and pure. There was great dust and spice to this delicious wine that was smooth and tender yet still possessed excellent rust and edge (93).

Big Mike uncorked a magnum of **1978 Henri Jayer Vosne Romanee Cros Parantoux**, whose nose was nutty, exotic and sexy, so perfumed and elegant yet rich, gamy, long and smooth with cola edges and flavors. A bit shy and shook up, the Jayer was still smooth, long and delicious (96M).

Another 1971 courtesy of Big Boy knocked on my door; it was a **1971 Drouhin**

**Charmes Chambertin** and had a gorgeous and pure nose. Someone remarked how Drouhin was □always smooth and pure.□ Honey and dry candy flavors rounded out this mature and smooth wine (91).

A **1945 Chateau de la Tour Clos de Vougeot** was next, clearly reconditioned and with a nutty and smoky nose. There were big aromatics accordingly, a bit unpure and with sulfur. Long smoky and square, about all I could say is that it had iron flavors. Next (88).

A **1985 Roumier Bonnes Mares** seemed like a visiting college applicant at a frat party, being the young buck that it was in the context of the evening. This was one of the better bottles of this that I have had. Perfumed, aromatic and tangy, the Roumier also had great meat, game, spice and balance (94).

**1966 Leroy Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru?** Sure why not. I had to have at least one premier cru wine, right? I know, Cros Parantoux is technically premier cru, but we all know better, don□t we now. It actually had a great nose, gamy and meaty, very forward and delicious, full of flavor and very tasty with its vitamins and iron on its finish. It made me feel like it was good for me (93+).

A **1986 Henri Mayer Echezeaux** had a great nose full of meat and spice along with the Mayer deep purple. There was a touch of must on the palate, but it was still exquisite. Mayer was a master of the so-called □lesser□ vintages (93).

Peter□s **1959 Leroy Musigny** had baked bread, toast, earth, yeast, game and spine. It was excellent, but who knows if it was really Musigny or even 1959, as some questioned. It was an excellent wine, but it was also an old Leroy causing some to mutter a few unpleasanteries (93).

A **1947 Jaboulet-Vercherre Pommards Rugiens Tasteduvin** bottling came out of the woodworks in jeroboam of all things. It was delicious; spiny, spicy, edgy, beefy, gamy and did I say edgy (94J)?

The wines were coming fast and furiously even though Ray Diesel was conspicuously absent. A **1985 Ponsot Clos de la Roche Vieilles Vignes** had a spectacular nose with a gorgeous and exotic red fruit symphony happening. Very decadent and so sweet and delicious, the Ponsot had great chocolate flavors on its finish (95).

A **1978 Roumier Bonnes Mares** out of magnum courtesy of Dr. Conti brought brooding to my mind first. It had an earthy, barnyardy, meaty nose that was very gamy and edgy in a citric way. Smooth and satiny, the □78 was nice, long and dusty, lingering in the belly but not as great as other experiences I have had with the wine (94M).

A **1952 Champy Chambolle Musigny** was very forward with bacon aromas and flavors (90).

The **1971 Roumier Bonnes Mares** out of magnum that Dr. Conti also brought was spectacular. It got a "wow," too, as its intense spine and great character were immediately both noticeable and noteworthy. The palate was intense, spiny and spectacular as a great 1971 oughta be, delivering more and more with each sip and smell. Big Mike quickly crowned it "wine of the night" (97+M).

A **1996 Henri Mayer Vosne Romanee Cros Parantoux** out of magnum was beefy, smoky, edgy but with too much oak. On the palate it was by contrast pure, feminine and elegant yet again with too much oak (92M).

That's twenty eight wines and counting for those of you keeping score at home.

The twenty ninth wine I had on this historic evening was a **1979 Roumier Bonnes Mares**, making it the fourth vintage tasted so far. It had a gorgeous nose that exuded wisdom. Rudy found it "a touch oaky like many '79s." Pure and with citric tang, I liked it a lot and didn't find its oak qualities intrusive (93).

A **1966 Louis Latour Romanee St. Vivant Les Quatre Journaux** was smooth, sexy and intense. I love this wine from the '50s and '60s (94).

Big Boy's **1971 DRC Romanee Conti** had a bit of a lower ullage than ideal and was accordingly a touch oxidized. However, the greatness of this wine still shone through on its texture and structure. Game, meat and animal dominated its nose along with some sherry. Gil noted "fig compote" and obviously the wine's usual freshness and intensity were compromised. Its finish was still extraordinary, hearty and big-time, but this is normally a 98 or 99-point wine (95A).

I finally decided to pull out my jeroboam of **1989 DRC La Tache**. Man, was it feeling heavy right about now. I slowly made my way up my table, hitting off all of my friends and anyone that stood in my way. The idea behind having this jero was to make my way around the room and share it with all the people I knew but couldn't sit with. By the time I got back to my seat (about six seats up the table) and then about four seats further down, I couldn't handle it anymore, so I traded it for a bottle of 1966 DRC Richebourg. Well, that was well planned and poorly executed. My duty to the pen and pad overtook everything else and my intended goodwill went to many less than anticipated. As far as those two wines, the La Tache was intense, spiny and vitaminy with a spectacular nose yet a smooth and seductive palate (95J). The **1966 DRC Richebourg** was smooth and sexy (94).

In between those two wines I actually had two others, one being a **1996 Meo Camuzet Vosne Romanee Cros Parantoux** out of jeroboam. Big-time youth and vitamin was the note. Yes, it was getting to be about that time at wine number thirty four (**93+J**).

Wendy and Jim had brought a great bottle of **1952 DRC La Tache**, which was a brick&hauuussss. The □52 La Tache was indeed a wine to make you clap your hands and shake your booty. Its great rust, spice, spine, cedar and edge were outstanding (**95**).

I tasted one more wine before heading off to Cru for the after party. The **1978 DRC Richebourg** was smooth and tasty full of beef and menthol as □78 DRCs are prone to be. It was classic and with sea salt flavors (**93**).

I temporarily recovered at Cru to taste seven more wines and record a couple of good notes. I probably had more wines, but it got ugly very quickly.

This was the second time I have been blessed to have the **1923 Rousseau Chambertin**, and it was outstanding. Mature yet still fresh, it had old candle wax, citrus and almost banana peel, and hints of animal fur. The flavors were insanely good; rich, creamy and spiny, this bottle was fresher than the one I had before even though it was from the same batch. Rudy found a little □acetone□ in the wine, but it was not overwhelming. Rob was admiring the fact that it was eighty four years old and had held up so well (**95**).

A palate cleansing **1981 Bollinger Champagne Vieilles Vignes** was spectacular again, from the same batch I had before at Cru. Intense, ridiculous and insane summed it up (**96+**).

A **1967 DRC Richebourg** had tobacco and citric tang in its nose, and more citrus and a pinch of Worcestershire on its palate. Unfortunately, I did not write a score down, nor did I write one down for the **1980 Dujac Clos de la Roche** that came three wines later and was the last wine of the night, or at least the last wine I recorded that night. I think the Dujac was □special,□ or maybe that was □spectacular.□ Was it □higher□ something, and □tasty?□ I give up. I can□t read what I wrote damnit.

One thing I could read what I wrote for was one of the wines of the night, a wine that should have been the last wine of the evening but settled for second to last, a phenomenal bottle of **1962 DRC Romanee Conti**. Actually, I didn□t take that many notes after all, but took a couple of good quotes including □indestructible and timeless,□ as well as □at maximum capacity of expression.□ Spectacular, intense and very, very special, the 1962 DRC Romanee Conti was about as good as it gets (**98**).

A **1959 Faiveley Chambertin Clos de Beze** was very good but anti-climactic after the

Conti. Showing brown sugar aromas typical of the vintage, its flavors of oat, earth and minerals fit the vintage profile as well (92).

That's forty two notes. Yeah, baby. I know a bunch of them were quickies, but sometimes a quickie is in order. I did what I could!

A couple of out-of-towners beat me up to take them out and after two night clubs and some more Champagne, I got home at 5AM. The next day was indubitably the largest hangover I have ever had. It was like someone chiseled a, well, chisel right into the top of my skull. The hangover was so great it actually lasted two days, and I was pretty sensitive to loud noises for about a week thereafter. I should have spit about fifteen times, just even fifteen sips; then, I would have been fine. I know it and am now ready for next year accordingly&

Congratulations and kudos to Daniel Johnnes for another extraordinary evening of camaraderie and fun. It took an ocean of work and months of planning to pull it off, and people often take that for granted.

Looking forward to next year!

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