



May 2016

The kings of Burgundy



The days when négociants held sway over the highs and lows of market pricing may be over, but they still wield enormous power over the quality of millions of bottles of Burgundy made each year, says Bill Nanson



Albert Bichot

The Bichots have resided in Burgundy for about 700 years, yet only decided to enter the wine business in the 1830s – so a long way from being the oldest company in my selection. Yet, as a family firm wedded in Burgundy it is close to being unique among its peers.

Albéric Bichot heads this self-funded family company and he points out, 'The plan of our maison is not to grow for the sake of it. We would prefer to finance everything ourselves and stay family-owned. Bichot remains independent, in good shape, and is focused on wines of the Grand Bourgogne.'

Grand Bourgogne? The strategy here is not dissimilar to that of other large négociants, concentrating on security of supply by buying and maintaining 100ha of domaines across the region: Long-Depaquit in Chablis, Clos Frantin in Nuits-St-Georges, Du Pavillon in Pommard, and Adélie in Mercurey. Although

Bichot owns the 65ha Domaine Long-Depaquit in Chablis, it also buys, yearly, the same volume again of grapes and wine in Chablis.

The Maison Albert Bichot labels are virtually identical to those of the domaine wines, so attention to the labels is important if you really must have a domaine wine. But quality is high. Pre-bottled samples show richness of fruit and fine direct intensity too. Post-bottling, I often find a more obvious vanilla component, which needs about three years to be absorbed by the maturing wine. I am rarely disappointed by bottles older than 10 years – particularly Domaine du Pavillon's Corton-Charlemagne, which drinks beautifully after eight or more years of storage.



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96

Albert Bichot, Clos de la Roche Grand Cru 2013 96

Not a massive nose, but with beautifully complex, airy fruit – deep and seriously gorgeous, showing a touch of violets too. An obvious sweetness of ripe fruit with a growing intensity of flavour. There is a width of tannin but it is virtually submerged. The length is simply excellent, with fine mouthwatering fruit flavour, and a little vanilla in the mix. This is clearly the best red of my line up.

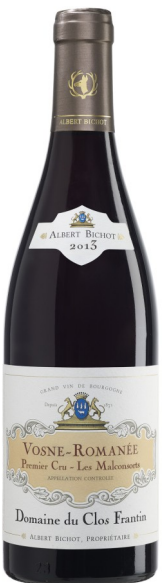
Drink 2016-2050 **Alc** 13.5% ➤



95

Domaine du Pavillon (Albert Bichot), Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru 2013 95

A large-scaled nose, which is fresh and mineral; Big and powerful, direct and silken, with really super waves of flavour. A great wine in the making, with really brilliant length too. **Drink** 2017-2040 **Alc** 13.5%



95

Domaine du Clos Frantin (Albert Bichot), Les Malconsorts 1er Cru, Vosne-Romanée 2013 95

Shy nose, with a modest but inviting spice – the first word that comes to mind is luxury. Then there's mouthwatering fruit, understated tannins and modestly vanilla-inflected barrel flavours. On the finish the tannin adds a salt-tinged texture but paired with beautiful complexity of fruit. Another lovely wine to wait patiently for.

Drink 2018-2040 **Alc** 13.5%



90

Domaine du Pavillon (Albert Bichot), Clos des Ursulines, Pommard 2013 90

A deeper fruit here, darker red, with an impression of oak but nothing overt to start. Wait another couple of minutes and there's a more obvious vanilla component. Big and juicy in the mouth; there's a real, sweet, mouthwatering fruit impact here – delicious. Of course, there's a modest amount of tannin and the complexity is more in the direction of barrel references; however, this remains a delicious wine. It would, of course, be better to wait for a year or two, but there's no shame in sitting back to enjoy this already. **Drink** 2017-2035 **Alc** 13%