



Handford

WINES



Handford Wines Burgundy En Primeur 2018 Offer

Contents

Burgundy 2018 Vintage Report	3
The Weather	3
The Market	3
How the Offer Works	4
The Wines.....	5
Frederic Esmonin, Gevrey Chambertin.....	5
Georges Lignier, Morey Saint Denis	6
Christian Clerget, Vougeot.....	8
Jean Chauvenet, Nuits Saint Georges.....	10
Jean Marc Millot, Nuits Saint Georges.....	12
Philippe Cheron, Nuits Saint Georges.....	12
Domaine Faiveley, Nuits Saint Georges and Mercurey	13
Domaine Roche de Bellene, Beaune	15
Maison Roche de Bellene, Beaune.....	16
Domaine de Comte Armand, Pommard.....	17
Michel Lafarge, Volnay.....	18
Thierry Matrot, Meursault	20
Domaine Francois Mikulski, Meursault.....	22
Domaine Leflaive, Puligny Montrachet	23
Domaine Paul Pillot, Chassagne Montrachet	24
Gerard Thomas, Saint Aubin	25
Domaine de Meix Foulot, Mercurey.....	26

Burgundy 2018 Vintage Report

The Weather

Plenty of rain in the early months of the year filled the soils in readiness for a near perfect season. Drier months of May and June brought no great heat wave, nor any hail storm. Conditions for flowering were superb with many reporting the fruit set within 3 days of flowering. This is crucial to a great vintage as it reduces the chance of mildew attacking the flowers and so staying in the fruits for the duration. I have read reports of mildew but none of the growers here saw it as a problem in 2018. July did see some hail on the 3rd and, more significantly on the 15th. As France were beating Croatia in the World Cup final some 70mm of hail and rain fell in just 20 minutes in parts of Nuits and Vosne. Crops were reduced by 20 to 50% in places. This is far from annihilation in Burgundy terms but it has left us with some very low allocations from Clerget, Millot and one or two of the Chauvenet 1er Crus. The rest of July and August were perfect with the most wonderful luminescence. Some picked whites as early as 24th August, while reds were brought in during the second week of September. The region was a hive of activity as everyone was keen to gather the fruit in short order. Christophe Drag at Chauvenet was one of few to leave bunches hanging. There seemed little to be lost or gained by this although I would expect a little more complexity after a slightly shorter time in bottle.

The glory of the vintage is the freshness, coolness and bright acidities that have been retained despite the power and concentration of fruit. These are far from over-ripe or New World style Pinots and Chardonnays, they are merely top quality and intense, classic Burgundies.

I usually report on the regions. In 2018 it's so good everywhere that there is nothing to be gained by that. Highlights include the sheer joy in Cotes de Beaune after such a plentiful year without hail (7 years in the last 12 in Volnay!). The whites tended to be that bit more immaculate coming from cooler and higher vineyards such as Dents de Chien, Blagny, Perrieres and Garenne. Reds from the little villages up the hill (Monthelie, Maranges, Auxey Duresses) are tremendous value. In the Cotes de Nuits there are some magical reds. Again those slightly higher vineyards benefitted from any cool breeze and greater exposure (Damodes, Barreaux, the Grand Crus, Lavaux and Estournelles Saint Jacques).

The Market

Along with Champagne, Burgundy remains the most sought after of French regions. There is just no stock anywhere so, despite the fair quantities produced in 2018, the wines will sell out as they did in 2015. There are some price increases dotted through the offer but most remain at the level of 2016 and 2017.

How the Offer Works

Prices are quoted per case of 6 (unless stated) in bond (i.e. duty free) at London City Bond. Wines may be stored by us or transferred in bond. Most wines will be shipped in the spring or autumn of 2020 for onward delivery. When you choose to receive wines the duty (currently £13.39 per case of 6) and V.A.T. on the total value (inc. duty) must be paid prior to delivery.

Transfer under bond and delivery to the UK mainland are free for orders over £500 (in bond value). Otherwise delivery charged at £17.50 per address. Wines may be collected from 105 Old Brompton Road. Storage with us at LCB is £1.08 per case per month inc. VAT.

Where possible I have included tasting notes to give an indication of style. More importantly Greg and I have tasted at least 10 wines for every wine chosen and most wines offered have been tried more than once during 2019. Drinking dates give an idea of when the wines will be ready. There are never fixed rules and wines should be enjoyed at as many stages of their life as possible. Village wines and generic Bourgogne should be tried, if not drunk in the early stages. In general we tend to be conservative on 'drink by' dates. Many of the 1er and Grand Crus from a great vintage like this will cellar for longer.

Please note

We have had an unprecedented number of enquiries on Burgundy 2018. Many wines will need to be allocated, in some cases by the single bottle. For the most difficult wines we will finalise allocations after our tasting on 21st January. Orders will be confirmed by 24th January and invoiced for payment by return and by bank transfer or debit cards. We do not accept credit cards for en Primeur and in bond offers, or for duty payments. Some growers ask that we do not export their wines.

**James Handford MW and
Greg Sherwood MW**



The Wines

Frederic Esmonin, Gevrey Chambertin

These wonderful vineyards are still managed by Frederic's father, Andre, who was bottling quality reds here at les Estournelles long before the fashion for domaine bottled burgundy took off. The vines are managed, not always with the aim of reducing yield to produce soupy concentration, but to achieve a balance between expression and concentration; a good deal of finesse and some fat to the wines. Andre is, in his modest way, one of most knowledgeable of Nuits vigneronns. He remembers details of vintages back to the 1950s and planted vines with his father in the 1940s. He is not a big fan of intervention, especially green harvesting, as he believes that 'more often than not, it is an attempt to correct mistakes that have been made in the pruning and longer term management of vineyards'.

Gevrey Chambertin Clos Prieur 2018

£295.00 (12)

This adjoins the 1er Cru vineyard of the same name, first planted by monks from the Abbey of Cluny. This is not at all shy for a village wine. Deep, black cherry fruit with a hint of Morey spice to it. Good depth and one of those 2018 village wines that might be 1er Cru in another year. Drinks well early but keep a few bottles for a decade. 2020 to 2028

Gevrey Chambertin 1er Cru Estournelles Saint Jacques 2018

£595.00 (12)

One of the most classic of all red 1er Crus this is high up and beside the famous Clos St Jacques. Somewhat sandy and more friable soils spawns a more energized and spring water pure red. These high vineyards that benefit from some exposure are perhaps the most outstanding in this vintage. La Garenne in Puligny is another example. Outstanding freshness and lift here, layers of ripe redcurrent, strawberry and with a hint of pepper and sweet spice. Estournelles 2018 will be happy in the cellar for a couple of decades or more. 2025 to 2039.

Ruchottes Chambertin Grand Cru 2018

£625.00

This is the wine that stood out all those years ago and so where our wonderful journey with Fred Esmonin began. They are the oldest vines of the domaine, and now over 60 years old. A grand old wine has not only been restarted, but has jumped to a different level. Knife like precision and intensity, beautifully constructed though must have time to marry the many components. 2028 to 2045

Georges Lignier, Morey Saint Denis

I met Georges at a village tasting in 1994. His nephew Benoit Stehly has been at the helm for a while now. He's a great thinker and happy to share. He will always dabble with wine making fashions (whole bunch fermentation is the current talking point), but is rarely thrown off a course planned to heighten freshness and typicity in his reds. There is more and more work in the vines. Soil structure is vital and he is running extensive trials on grassing between rows to conserve moisture deep in the soil and force the vines roots away from the surface. Harvests are slightly earlier than the average and there is extensive selection, even in a great year like 2018. Barrels are now sourced from five coopers. he particularly favours La Tonellerie du Val de Loire for its oak coming from central France. We called 2018 his 'lettre a Pere Noel' vintage.

Morey Saint Denis 2018

£135.00

We tasted this late in the sequence as it is so much more dense, with vigorous tannic structure and a power of fruit that you can only feel at such an early stage. Full and with the signature pepper and spice feel of Morey. It will five years to show that classic, Morey softness and sex appeal. 2023 to 2029.

Morey Saint Denis 1er Cru Clos des Ormes 2018

£199.00

Again, sturdy tannins box in much that this has to offer. It's a sign of great things to come as there is a super cool, almost chocolate richness in the soft centre. Outstanding. 2026 to 2033.



With Benoit Stehly

Gevrey Chambertin 1er Cru les Combottes 2018**£360.00**

Sandwiched between Grand Crus, Combottes is in a slight dip with meagre soils that seem to give a unique style. Berries are a bit smaller resulting in lower yields and an uncanny fullness and depth. It's on the Morey side and, like the Grand Cru, has more attributes of Morey than of Gevrey. Deep, deep purple in colour, dense in its appearance and driven by a sumptuous core of ripe, black cherry. This and the Clos des Ormes were the first to come into the cuverie. They both have an extra dimension of coolness that shouldn't be missed. 2026 to 2035

Clos Saint Denis 2018**£525.00**

Being exposed to the drying north winds, fruit is often more delicate, but always clean and with mineral notes. It is finer in colour but star bright. Some delicious subtleties include dried apricot, cherry compote and star anise. A thing of beauty that prompted me to note, 'truly perfect'. 2026 to 2039

Clos de la Roche 2018**£645.00**

The last two Grand Crus are epic. Outrageous density, firm but fine tannins, racy acidity and buckets of pure fruit to come. Nearly half of the Roche and Bonnes Mares are aged in new barrels. The work Benoit has done with coopers has paid off as there are no hard edges here as sense of spirit and sang froid that barrel ageing imparts, and not the flavour of wood, is judged to perfection. 2028 to 2042

Bonnes Mares 2018**£825.00**

A little under one third of a hectare produces around 1300 bottles. Wines of this weight and density are more suitable for the whole bunch fermentation so as to keep the wine as fresh and lifted as possible despite such massive concentration. Of course it's a little austere now and with a slightly saline finish. Before that there is cassis and redcurrant notes with plenty of spice. Like many great 2018 this is a wine of life, energy and sheer goodness. 2029 to 2044

Christian Clerget, Vougeot

The first time I met Christian he was in a hurry to catch a plane to Nepal and climb the 7th or 8th highest peak in the world. In November he's found another mountain to summit, a bit closer to home I think. Fortunately his wife Isabelle and daughter Justine are equal parts of a wonderful family who strive to express what their vineyards offer. As Christian says, 'don't try to cheat the vines'. Justine is in charge now though and starting to make her mark. She is forging ahead with biodynamics and using whole bunch fermentation for almost a third of the harvest. All is vintage dependent of course. 2018 is bounteous here, with no need for pigeage and a super light pressing. These are very much in the elegant, pure and silky style and Clerget is now a domaine of supreme quality.



Justine Clerget

Morey Saint Denis Blanc 'les Crais' 2018

£199.00

With supple, creamy peach and pear notes, this has already proved a hit at our January tasting evening with Justine. White from a red region is a quirk of burgundy that's worth adding to the cellar. Will evolve well in the medium term if you can resist it tonight! 2020 to 2025

Chambolle Musigny 2018**£250.00**

All picked by mid September but Justine had hoped to finish even earlier. It's been an interesting discussion as those who left harvest a little later don't seem to have lost the freshness and acids that is gained by earlier picking. This remains one of the freshest, purest and most attractive of village wines tasted. Bright red currant and red cherry fruit that is wonderfully persistent. Good early drinker too. 2020 to 2027.

Vosne Romanee 'les Violettes' 2018**£325.00**

These vines are high up by the famous Bize whites of Vougeot. The savoury, clam shell, charcoal and saline notes capture the terroir perfectly while the mid palate is thick with black fruits. A very serious wine in 2018, worthy of 1er Cru status and more than a few years in the cellar. 2024 to 2030.

Vougeot 1er Cru les Petits Vougeots 2018**£375.00**

Although the Clergets have a little Echezeaux, this is the flagship wine. 5 generations have worked this land which is a stone's throw from their house in the village. It lies just north east of the road that comes in from the Chateau du Clos Vougeot. Full of life, vigour and energy, qualities that are consistent here despite vagaries of vintage. These two 1er Crus are really something special. 2026 to 2033

Chambolle Musigny 2018 1er Cru les Charmes**£375.00**

There is as much concentration as you can cram in without being over-ripe. A little wild and nervy to begin with and with very fine and uniform acidity. Transitions to a generosity and power that knocks you back. the finish is finer, saline and more delicate fruits. You can almost eat this one! 2028 to 2036

Echezeaux 2018**£695.00**

Two parcels in 'en Orveau' total nearly a hectare. This is a real privilege to taste with Justine as this is likely to be one of the few best wines she will ever make. So much energy that's it's almost life giving and the batteries won't run out for 50 years or more. Astonishing. 2030 to 2045+

Jean Chauvenet, Nuits Saint Georges

These cellars, carefully managed since 1990 by Jean's son in law Christophe Drag, are just off the main road. Fork right as you go north out of town and you will be treated to some of the best in town. Vineyard holdings are relatively large here but in Boussselots, Vaucrains and Perrieres; Christophe has some of the finest 1er Cru vineyards in the Cotes de Nuits. Truly outstanding in recent years such as 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016 and 2018. He harvests into very small crates and so cleaner and less damaged fruit can be moved directly into the fermentation vats without the need of auger or pump. Almost all the fruit was de-stemmed and there is a cool pre-fermentation maceration for 5 to 6 days. There are two 1er Cru vineyards north of town and two south. As the village wine incorporates some of the 1er Cru and finer village vineyards it is a very good buy for drinking in 2 or 3 years. For a man who confessed to extreme anxiety over that crucial harvesting moment, his decision to leave the fruit on a little later than most in 2018 seems to question the urgency of his peers.

Nuits Saint Georges 2018

£140.00

Fruit comes from 5 parcels in 4 climats; Alliots, Charmottes, St Jacques and St Julien. All but St Jacques are iron rich and with gravel or sand to give good drainage. The St Jacques is chalky and with mean soils. Bright and dense in appearance with power on the nose. Kirsch, klawoutis, vanilla notes, lush for a village red. Good energy too. Excellent. 2020 to 2024.

Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru Aux Argillas 2018

£245.00

A south facing vineyard with rows planted north to south to reduce mid day sun burn. This is somewhat counterintuitive to 2016 and 2017 where I found the wine to dense, chewy and long keeping. The 2018, a more generous vintage, has yielded a cool, almost minty and certainly pomegranate, watermelon feel. It's rare to feel the combination of such gorgeous fruits along with this freshness and verve. 2023 to 2030

Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru les Damodes 2018**£275.00**

From high up on the north side, there is a strip of rock running through that results in just an 8 to 10cm layer of top soil. Damodes bears fruit with an edge of mineral and the seductive power of its immediate neighbour Vosne Romanee. Silky, wild strawberry, red cherry, and a little raspberry ripeness here. The mineral tone is understated for now in favour of a long, ripe fruit driven core. 2025 to 2033

Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru Aux Bouselots 2018**£225.00**

Still north of the villages but sheltered, and a little lower down the hill. Soils are more clay and hold water well in hot, dry summers. Berries tend to be smaller and more concentrated. Soils are contiguous with Vosne Romanee les Ravioles. So, a fair amount of force and energy up front with darker, more brooding fruits to finish. May the force be with you. 2027 to 2036.

Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru les Perrieres 2018**£275.00**

Hail took around a third of this from us. If anything that has had a positive effect on quality, reducing the yield in what was threatening to be an over-cropped vintage. Exceptional depth of colour and a very finely tuned nosed of black cherry and cream. The palate is tough for now but you can feel from the layers of texture that it's hiding something magnificent. 2028 to 2040

Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru Vaucrains 2018**£299.00**

Perhaps the worst hit by the hail, nature seems to know it's the best stuff!! It should surely be a Grand Cru. It seems that all bets are off on this bit of local politics that make Brexit seem like a walk in the park. Christophe has 42 acres that produce a healthy 9 barrels. 2018 is an open, expressive, massive, soupy, red and black fruited monster of a wine. I'm not sure I'll see many like this in the years to come. 2030 to 2048.

Jean Marc Millot, Nuits Saint Georges

Jean Marc and Christine have passed on their hard earned experiences and beautiful vines to their second daughter, Alix. She is very well qualified for the task making just small changes that result in the Millot label being highly prized. There is just a little new oak on the Grand Crus and the Suchots but the wines rely on a very natural feel and intensity of fruit. The Cotes de Nuits Villages, originally from a single plot, has been a great value wine for some years. Savigny is from 3 different plots inherited from Jean Marc's uncle and makes a very attractive, early drinker.

Wines now sold out

Philippe Cheron, Nuits Saint Georges

Philippe Cheron lost his long time management role at Domaine Belland following the sale of the business. He must have been chuffed to learn that his grandfather, Paul Misset, purchased vineyard land in Clos Vougeot, Vosne Romanee and Chambolle Musigny in the 1930s and 1950s and the leases had finally expired. There are 1.4 hectares in Clos Vougeot, split 50/50 between the high and low part; a stunning lieu dit above Richebourg in Vosne and 12 tiny parcels in Chambolle. With gentle handling, only a little de-stemming, cool settling and no fining and rarely any filtration, Philippe is going for a simple and natural style. It's wonderful to watch the development of a grower so determined to express wonderful fruit. He is now fully organic. This is the seventh vintage of our journey with Philippe and it seems the project is moving into a new orbit. Pleased to report that the 2013 Chambolles are tasting beautifully now and that bodes well for the first class examples here.

Vosne Romanee les Barreaux 2018

£250.00

This is the most heavenly situation. Just under the trees and looking down over Richebourg and Romanee Saint Vivant to the right and, to the left, over the great 1er Crus of Beaux Monts and Suchots towards Echezeaux and Clos Vougeot. There are only 3 growers to share a little over 3 hectares (one other being Anne Gros); quite a place to go to work and even better to enjoy a bottle with a picnic! It's a steep slope with chalky soil that turns out a lively and finely tuned red cherry fruit Vosne. There's more life and love than ever in the 2018. 2022 to 2028.

Chambolle Musigny '40 Ouvrees' 2018

£250.00

A great comeback following the 2016 catastrophe that saw these Chambolle vineyards almost completely devastated but the April frost. 9 barrels this year is the most Philippe has ever produced. Soft red fruits are silk, seductive and with an ethereal feel. An uplifting acid zing balances a finish that becomes ever more animated on the mid palate. Wow! 2024 to 2031

Domaine Faiveley, Nuits Saint Georges and Mercurey

Approaching two centuries of Faiveley expertise we see the fruits of that experience in this selection of domaine wines (from vineyards owned and managed by the family). Perhaps more importantly the brilliant Jerome Flous has now overseen the entire process from vineyard to bottle for a decade now.

Mercurey 'Clos Rochette' Monopole 2018 Blanc

£175.00 (12)

The 2018 Mercurey Blanc Clos Rochette offers up pretty impressive aromas of freshly cut apples, yellow grapefruit citrus and white flowers, followed by an open-kit palate which shows impressive lushness and intensity for the vintage, with concluding notes of green apple pastille and citrus rock candy. As always, fabulous quality for the money! Now to 2024

Corton Charlemagne Grand Cru 2018

£840.00

Aromas of lemon peel, mandarin oil, green apple puree, white flowers and pear that are framed by a classy kiss of expensive new French oak. On the palate, the wine is full, fleshy and lush, racy and fresh but also beautifully poised, with a deep and concentrated core of fruit, bright mouth-watering acids and a long, persistent finish. 2024 to 2031



Mercurey 'la Framboisiere' Monopole 2018 Rouge**£199.00 (12)**

The 2018 Mercurey La Framboisière is lovely, rich, intense expression opening in the glass with expressive aromas of red cherries, raspberries, cassis and vanilla pod spice. On the palate, the wine is medium bodied, ample and succulent, with a generous core of ripe wild strawberry fruit, red bramble berries, juicy bright acids and fine grained polished tannins texture. A wine that generously over delivers. 2021 to 2025

Gevrey Chambertin 1er Cru Combe aux Moine 2018**£275.00**

Delicate perfumed bouquet of wild berries, cool dark cassis, forest bramble berries and candied rock. On the palate, the wine is medium bodied, pure and supremely elegant with a succulent core of saline black fruit and satiny soft tannins that caress your palate on the long, juicy finish. 2028 to 2035

Corton Clos des Corton Grand Cru Monopole 2018**£750.00**

Another fabulous cuvée showing superbly from barrel, revealing an attractive bouquet of ripe blue and black berry fruits, orange rind, wood smoke, buttered brown toast and piquant dark chocolate notes deftly kissed by classy new oak. On the palate, the wine is medium bodied, sleek and dense, with a deep and layered core, excellent piercing concentration, vibrant mouth watering acids and a long, beautifully defined finish. Full of class. 2025 to 2034

Clos Vougeot Grand Cru 2018**£650.00**

Delicious approach with a youthfully opulent bouquet of ripe black berries, rich black cherry, musk, pink rock candy and a creamy lick of new oak. On the palate, the wine is full-bodied, deep and quite powerful with an abundantly fine tannin structure, juicy fresh piercing acids and a nicely sappy, saline black berry finish. 2027 to 2040

Charmes Chambertin Grand Cru 2018**£675.00**

Typical of a top-notch Charmes, it exhibits a seductive bouquet of saline blueberry, sweet black berry fruits and spicy bruleed new oak. In the mouth, the wine is elegant but powerful, with a crisp bright acidity and soft fine tannins. The finish is like eating pink and blue rock candy given its velvety texture and buttered brown toast black berry fruitiness. 2029 to 2042

Domaine Roche de Bellene, Beaune

An exciting threesome here, as the great, white Savigny bites back after last year's frost-out. There are some very old and well tended vines producing the Beaunes. Nicolas Potel gave up his organic certification in 2013 and more are following; leaf minors that transmit virus can be destroyed by selective insecticides instead of the weaker, but non selective, 'flame thrower' solution that the organics allow. The 'reasonable' approach carries over to the winery too where the most gentle handling is done, where possible, in the absence of electricity.

Savigny les Beaune Blanc 2018

£99.00

Savigny offers subtle changes in terroir and Nicolas counts seven different soil types in the small area that yields this juicy chardonnay with the coolness of pomegranate and some crushed almond too. A real head turner. 2020 to 2024

Beaune 'Fleurs Blanches' Rouge 2018

£99.00

A stone's throw from the famous 1er Cru Clos du Roi and another attractive Beaune in this great year here. The locals say the relatively new motorway is one of the best terroirs in the Cotes de Beaune and you can just see the road from here! Dense, deep, loganberry juice with super long finish. This is one of few appellations to give the taste of classic ripe Pinot and that New World sort of way! Exotic and delicious. 2021 to 2026

Savigny les Beaune Hommage a Jean Ferte 2018

£165.00

Jean Ferte was Nicolas' great uncle and, along with his father, a great mentor. Back in the day he was the top man in Savigny. This is a deep and pure red with an almost sweet intensity of red cherry, cranberry and raspberry fruit. One of the best expressions of Savigny that I have seen. Wonderful. 2023 to 2029

Vosne Romanee 1er Cru les Suchots 2018

£545.00

This is perhaps the Vosne vineyard that could be Grand Cru. There is all the extract of the sister vineyards but with an extra dimension of structure. Minerals, fruits and explosive acidity in layer upon layer. 2029 to 2042

Maison Roche de Bellene, Beaune

Nicolas Potel's latest trick is to manage the red wine cellars by candle light as normal lighting damages the resveratrol; a key compound in the cholesterol reducing properties of red wine. Ageing is more and more in larger barrels and there are now soft wax capsules for Grand Crus; just put the corkscrew straight through the wax ... most satisfying!

Montagny Villages 2018 **£69.00**

Here are some new vines to Nicolas' stable. This is a goody with richness in the mid palate but plenty of aromatic, stephanotis and tangerine juice delicacy. Lovely. 2020 to 2022

Bourgogne Pinot Noir Vieilles Vignes 2018 **£55.00**

A phenomenal Pinot now aged in large barrels. The super bright sheen is the least of its appeal as ripe red cherry and crunchy raspberry notes emanate from the glass. Bright and cool on the finish. Concentrated yet refreshing. Lovely. 2020 to 2023

Pommard aux Vignots 2018 **£180.00**

High up the hill and almost due south facing, this gives a life – the coolness of pear and water melon fruit and with rounded, ripe black cherry and cassis too. Hints of char and pencil lead along with a solid tannic structure result in a classical, almost old fashioned style of red Burgundy that's good for the cellar! 2025 to 2033

Vosne Romanee 1er Cru Beaux Monts 2018 **£395.00**

Very deep opaque red black. A monster of a red with extreme persistence and mountains of lush black cherry and briar fruits. Hints of cooling chocolate and strawberry on the finish. This is very fine. 2027 to 2037

Charmes Chambertin Grand Cru 2018 **£750.00**

If you can take any more fruit concentration and length of flavour here it is. The same, massive black fruits, a touch of black olive saltiness and more lift of natural acidity. Wow! 2031 to 2044

Le Chambertin 2018 **£1695.00**

Double dense blackberry vanilla cream and with that same oyster shell saltiness, silky tannin and so many layers it takes a minute or two on the palate to register them. Phenomenal. 2033 to 2048

Domaine de Comte Armand, Pommard

After a seven year apprenticeship, the capable Paul Zinetti has taken over here and done an exceptional job under the tricky conditions. Paul has enlisted the help of one of our newer MWs, Catherine Petrie. She started at the 2018 harvest and so it's bound to be good this year! Fully organic since 2005 and now certified as biodynamic, the lower parts of the vineyard are worked by horse and the reduced compaction is already resulting in a better soil structure. Epeneaux is, of course, one of the great reds of the Cotes de Beaune.

Auxey Duresses 1er Cru 2018

£185.00

It has always felt strange that I have to work so hard for a few bottles of this one. It has been worth it. They say that global warming is having a positive effect on this high village reds and I wouldn't disagree. Burly, big flavours of blackcurrant, loganberry, a hint of minty freshness and a dash of cream. It's all out ripeness in 2018 and the few bottles we have will disappear from stock in no time. 2023 to 2031.

Pommard 1er Cru Clos des Epeneaux 2018

£595.00

Magnums £660.00 (3)

At just over 5 hectares, this is one of the largest monopole vineyards in Burgundy. It is managed biodynamically and with utmost respect not only for the vineyard, but for the expression of its constituent parts. Catherine showed me the four components: they divide the vineyard into four with the oldest vines on the downhill Beaune side and the youngest on the uphill Pommard corner. The qualities of each influence the final wine. Styles vary from sinewy, chewy tannin and bold black fruits to a more delicate, orange peel and minerality from the younger vines. The oldest vines show a piercing concentration (almost too much to bear!) and those uphill on the Beaune side a little more softness, cream and bright aromatics (like a Beaune!). As you can imagine the final wine will be a firework display in the mouth. This red tends to keep a very long time (don't touch anything less than 12 years old!) but I fancy there is some move to freshen this up and allow for a little earlier drinking. 2027 to 2042.

Michel Lafarge, Volnay

Michel Lafarge, about to turn 92 at time of tasting, says that 2018 is the most amazing vintage he has witnessed. That is quite something from a man who was planting vines with his father in the 1930s! His son Frederic has a well earned reputation as a leading biodynamic viticulteur, keeping chickens in the Clos de Chateau des Ducs and reviving some ancient methods. These reds have become the most sought after in the Cotes de Beaune. Of his 8 hectares, only one is of 1er Cru standing, but their fruit combines delicious Pinot flavours with layers of firm mineral character and delicate vanilla from a short-ish oak ageing. I have noted consistent depth, complexity and perfect balance across the range. The 1er Cru ageing cellar is my temple. Coming here to taste is not a job but a pilgrimage.

Bourgogne Aligote Raisins Dorees 2018

£135.00 (12)

A patch of very old vines that tends to ripen with a heavier colour and flavour. Raisins Dorees is a clone or type of Aligote, perhaps best known at the Bouzeron estate of Aubert de Villaine. The 2018 was brought in a week later than recent years, 24th September, and much later than any other white in the region. This has resulted in remarkable ripeness and complexity of ripe pear and quince fruit with a lime zing. Incredible – and even better if you can keep it for a couple of years. 2020 to 2024+

Meursault 2018

£175.00

Ripe, but with a real tonic feel. Great tension along with more-ish and sumptuous mid palate fruits. Great poise and length these white from Lafarge are well worth a go. 2021 to 2024

Meursault Vendanges Selectionnees 2018

£199.00

Fabulous energy and complexity of fresh herb, citrus and that hint of tonic that we saw in the village wine. Delicious. 2022 to 2026

Beaune 1er Cru Aigrots Blanc 2018

£295.00

Aigrots has a rich clay loam soil with a fine dusting of gravel like stones that yields a lavish style with some minerality. This is an excellent pick in 2018; what is too often a little over ripe is now ripe, but with high tensile structure to balance. Stunning. 2020 to 2025

Bourgogne Passetoutgrains a l'Exception 2018

£75.00

As ever this is half Pinot and half Gamay. The vines, planted by Frederic's grandfather, are now over 90 years old and the planting is mixed and so this is a 'field blend' from an exceptional site just below Meursault. Frederic tells me that, with such old vines, meagre yields and small berries it is not always easy to tell the Gamay from the Pinot in the field, especially as they seem to synchronise their ripening naturally. This was the first wine to be bottled and sold directly from the domaine in 1934. Unlike most years you can taste the fleshy, cherry notes of the Gamay. There's a spicy, glossy and ever so slightly sweet finish. Excellent. 2020 to 2024.

Bourgogne Ptg a l'Exception 'Anthologie' 2018 Magnums **£199.00 (6 mags)**

A special cuvee and the project of granddaughter Clothilde, Anthologie is selected from vines that were planted in 1932 to 1935 (so similar age to Michel Lafarge). The best fruit is selected and some wine is aged in a new 500 litre barrel. Blood red, light, transparent and with lifted complexity on the nose. Clementine, clove, red fruits... so many aromas here. 2020 to 2026

Bourgogne Rouge 2018 **£165.00 (12)**

Another parcel of very old vines; these are 50+. There's a bit of debate over the value of old vines at the moment. One of the strong arguments for is that the vigneron are in tune with the vine that they have grown up with. Frederic would have seen every vintage in the life of this vineyard. More linear, with a fine focus of red fruits with a stylish, Volnay like temperament. Tastes higher than its rank and will cellar very well. 2021 to 2026.

Cotes de Beaune 2018 **£125.00**

An enticing, soft raspberry with delicate milk chocolate, and the quality of Beaune 1er Cru emphasises 2018 as a truly outstanding vintage. Excellent. 2020 to 2025

Volnay 2018 **£185.00**

Despite the evident ripeness this is more fine and lifted than the 2017 (perhaps because there was no Volnay Selectionnees in 2017). Pure, raspberry, redcurrant and cranberry with thin layers of white chocolate. There are floral notes of violet and lavender before a super fresh and slightly saline finish. Immaculate, expressive and very fine indeed. 2023 to 2030.

Volnay Selectionnees 2018 **£225.00**

Difficult to follow that Volnay but this, of course is a step up with a little black cherry and cream thrown in. Astounding complexity. This is a rare and memorable red. 2024 to 2034

Beaune 1er Cru les Aigrots 2018 **£295.00**

Plenty of juicy, red fruits here. Real opulence and an excellent example of how stunning the vintage is in this particular area. 2023 to 2032

Beaune 1er Cru les Greves 2018 **£325.00**

Vines here are 98 years old in 2018, so just turned 100! Greves shows more elegance and refinement with lavender, violets and soft rose petal. There's a hint of cream to balance a dab of solid tannin. Silky, seductive and sumptuous are the headlines here though. 2024 to 2034

Other Volnay 1er Crus are now sold out

Thierry Matrot, Meursault

Now run by Adele and Ailsa Matrot, the third daughter, being established with her chef partner at the hotel le Chevreuil in Meursault; highly recommended, of course. There are bright fruits and super silky tannins on this exciting range of reds. Meursault, 'La Piece sous le Bois' is very smart. Volumes of the great whites have suffered a little through lack of rain through the growing season. But this element of stress has led to wines worth chasing after. The girls have expanded the red vineyards in the Hautes Cotes and these are tremendous in 2018.

Bourgogne Chardonnay 2018

£65.00

Given a more abundant harvest the grapes come from closer to home as proven by the cool, tangerine notes and fair depth too. Clean and crystalline finish. Very attractive. 2020 to 2022.

Meursault 2018

£195.00

This is one of those wines you just want to own. It is very much in line with the 2017, but with bells and whistles on. Delightful, silky textured, soft, orange and pomegranate fruits with just enough richness and custard cream. All perfectly in its place. It's a wine that gives a lot of pleasure over time. We have done many a vertical tasting going back 10 years or so and it really is such a satisfying experience. 2021 to 2029.

Meursault 1er Cru Blagny 2018

£250.00

The bowl shaped Blagny vineyard sits high up above the conjunction of Meursault and Puligny. It basks in the late summer sunshine to give intensity and minerality. Although firm and four square as ever, there is good lift of dried apricot skin, grape flesh and a touch of spice. There are hints of rose petal and sweet lime. Another good year for the vines up here. 2024 to 2031.

Meursault 1er Cru Charmes 2018

£275.00

Oh the charm of Charmes! Super fine, this year with quite piercing concentration of melon, stone fruit and lemon zest. More perfumed, floral notes here and that feel of just biting into a freshly picked clementine. Spectacular, and an ideal juxtaposition to the brawn of Blagny. 2023 to 2032.

Puligny Montrachet 1er Cru les Chalumeaux 2018 **£275.00**

On the Meursault side but well above the Combettes. In great years there is more lift and purity of a classical Puligny. Fine acids, white nectarine, some riper peach in appealing layers of fruit and with a more closed and saline finish. This reminds me of the 2014 with a little more concentration and complexity. 2025 to 2033.

Puligny Montrachet 1er Cru les Combettes 2018 **£375.00**

Low on the Meursault side the protected microclimate and slightly richer soils here yield honeyed citrus fruits with a dash of caramel syrup on the finish. There's a genuine feel of grape juice here. A silly thing to say perhaps but I always feel that it's a high compliment when you can say the wine really does taste like the grapes it is made from!! 2025 to 2032

Meursault 1er Cru les Perrieres 2018 **£375.00**

The Matrots have half a hectare here which is a pretty decent holding in what is possibly the finest 1er Cru white vineyard. The vines are 50 and 55 years old producing a miserly 200 dozen bottles. Tasted only just after it's racking into tank for the final assemblage and so a bit clunky. But you can see the immense complexity and fine acidity. Will be a classic. 2026 to 2035+

Maranges Rouge 2018 **£85.00**

Croquant, lively acidity and with the depth of fruit of a 1er Cru in many other years. Super value and a real success for the Matrot daughters. 2020 to 2023

Maranges 1er Cru la Fuissiere Rouge 2018 **£115.00**

A red wine village by Chassagne as the Cotes de Beaune tapers to a more undulating landscape. In such ripe years as 2018 these little villages on the Hautes Cotes (Auxey and Monthelie too) are juicy, attractive and outstanding buys. Supple red cherry and raspberry fruits with a snap, crackle and pop acidity that balances a tender, tannic structure. The quality and sheer desirability here is way ahead of the embryonic reputation of this wonderful village. 2021 to 2026

Monthelie Rouge 2018 **£120.00**

More dense, rounded and with juicy loganberry and raspberry fruits. This gives a more contemporary and cosmopolitan expression of Pinot. Easy on the eye and one that you can tuck into as soon as it lands! 2020 to 2022+

Blagny Rouge 1er Cru la Piece sous le Bois 2018 **£225.00**

A favourite at Handford, and simply huge in 2018. Deeper, black red at the core, rich, spice and liquorice nose, sweet, blackcurrant and black cherry. There's a sprinkle of cinnamon, vanilla toast to give an extra layer of complexity. It's the ideal Christmas red, but for Christmas 2029! Clive Coates MW has said that this is 'one of the great reds of Burgundy' 2026 to 2032.

Domaine Francois Mikulski, Meursault

Francois' father was a Free Polish fighter at Arnhem. After the war he married Pierre Boillot's sister and was determined to follow a life in the vines. Francois himself has travelled the world, purely for research purposes, of course, working with the greats that are Domaine Roulot and Littorai. The domaine was born from land inherited from Pierre and has been supplemented his wife, Marie-Pierre's family holdings. The vineyards are fully mature now with the newest plantings in les Poruzots now a quarter of a century old. Fruit is carefully selected and de-stemmed. There is a cool settling before fermentation and ageing in barrels. Francois uses around 20% new oak. There are some 450 litre barrels now and a new cellar has just been finished over the road and conveniently conjoined by the excellent Goutte d'Or restaurant. Francois and Marie-Pierre's son in law, Thomas 'le Boc' Boccon, is being groomed to take over. These are the safe hands of CS Beaune Rugby's long time number 8.



Bourgogne Aligote 2018

£79.00

Pear, greengage, mango, vanilla, ripe lime and green fruit pastilles all gently marinated in a fluffy custard cream sauce. Remarkable wine and will benefit from a year or two in bottle. 2020 to 2023

Meursault 2018

£240.00

This has those 100 year old vines in Limousin (some likely to be released as a separate cuvee later on), some of the Poruzots fruit as well as the classic 3 parcels of Meix Chavaux, Charmes and Narvaux. The sheer weight and some reduction (we are still tasting from barrel in early November here) makes it difficult to make precise judgement now. I can find good minerality on the nose and a creamy character to balance the powerful fruits. 2022 to 2027

Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2018

£85.00

A revelation; the 2017 was fabulous and a huge surprise to many. The 2018 is quite a bit better. A year in barrel and racked into cuves and then, crucially, a 3 month rest on fine lees before bottling. Mini Pommard. 2020 to 2024

Volnay 1er Cru les Santenots 2018**£299.00**

Often cited as the red burgundy from a white wine vineyard, the 2018 shows all those chalky notes of the earth, it's very pure but has loads more stuffing than ever before. Super ripe red cherry and some raspberry fruits with a touch of shortbread and the slightest hint of spice. It's a fun wine to collect, this. 2023 to 2031

Chardonnay and 1er Cru whites are now sold out

Domaine Leflaive, Puligny Montrachet

Brice de la Morandiere took the helm in 2015 following the passing of his Aunt, Anne Claude Leflaive. After a couple of years of careful observation he has made a few, considered changes to keep this great domaine on the front foot. The cellar under the main house is refurbished and old stocks have been carefully analysed, and re-bottled if necessary, to gain the best understanding of factors important to maturing the wines in bottle. 2018 is a great vintage here. Nature was fully on side, the only complaint being that she wanted to produce a bit too much. So, there was a green harvest (removal of berries at an early stage of development) to moderate the yield and ensure the optimal quality. The domaine continues to be the standard bearer of organic and biodynamic Burgundy.

Wines are only available on allocation and in balanced orders. Please ask for the separate list.

Bourgogne Blanc 2018**£295.00**

Rich yet grippy at the same time there is peach juice, peach skin, peach stones and sweet citrus as well as a lovely expression of stony soils. Lifted, firm but fair on the long finish. 2018 to 2022

Puligny Montrachet 2018**£465.00**

Always a great wine for the gourmand this; persistence and power on the nose, deep and mouth watering grapefruit and tropical fruits. More finesse and delicacy on the fine finish giving away its true pedigree. Not overly complicated but over delivers; happiness in a bottle. 2020 to 2025.

Meursault 1er Cru Sous le Dos d Ane 2018**£625.00**

A little more stern and youthful in structure and with frisky, citrus fruits. Being just below the great Perrieres vineyard this is packed with minerality and expression. Full of character and with a real kick to it. Strong stuff and worthy of a few years in the cellar. 2022 to 2026

There are tiny quantities of other 1er and Grand Cru wines. Please ask for a full list.

Domaine Paul Pillot, Chassagne Montrachet

'Domaine Paul Pillot is one of those producers making whites with a real gleam, a luminous clarity. I taste hundreds of wines in burgundy week, and have to scramble through my notes to check in with my views on many of them, but with Domaine Paul Pillot I remember where the table was in the room, and where I was standing as the wine hit my taste buds. You just do with wines like that.' Daily Telegraph, Jan 2015

Thierry Pillot and his father, Paul, are so understated that you wonder how anyone ever got to the end of the track at the end of the village. Their house, cellars and many of the vineyards are high up, overlooking Puligny and St Aubin. And this is the point; with many Chassagne properties farming low lying lands, this is an exception and the wines are exceptional. Very limited quantities here.

Bourgogne Chardonnay 2018

£105.00

Expressive aromas of green apple pastille, sweet lemon pulp and white honey suckle flowers, framed by an attractive degree of smoky reduction. The palate is medium-bodied and succulent showing delicious acid vibrancy and admirable fruit intensity and depth for the vintage uniting seriousness and charm to punch well above its appellation weight for the appellation in 2018. Drink now to 2022+

Saint Aubin 1er Cru Charmois 2018

£180.00

Seductive perfumed bouquet with yellow flowers and lemon blossom scents melting into yellow citrus fruit notes. The palate is medium bodied, fleshy and vibrant showing a lovely fruit concentration while retaining an edgy acidity of lemon and lime, freshly sliced green pear and yellow grape fruit. Power and elegance abound. This is really quite impressive for the vintage. Drink now to 2024+

1er Cru whites are now sold out

Gerard Thomas, Saint Aubin

Gerard is a kindly, robust and ruddy faced year round Santa, whose life has been dedicated to his vineyards. He has rebuilt some unusually precarious terraces, replanted and maintained his Chardonnay vines with pride. The first Saint Aubin 1er Cru is endearingly known as 'dog's tooth' by many clients; old stone gate posts look like giant canines. The second takes its name from cats that bask in this sun-baked parcel on the lower slopes. Gerard is on top form and having fun in the vineyards with his grandsons, Isabelle's twin boys. Isabelle and Anne are in control. Congratulations to them as the 2018 Garenne is the best ever from Domaine Thomas.

Saint Aubin 'Champ Tirant' 2018

£180.00 (12)

For a simple, village white this has tremendous power, energy and freshness. A touch of caramel to go with the delicate, orange and lemon fruits. Beautifully rounded, balanced and persistent. 2019 to 2021.

Saint Aubin 1er Cru Murgers des Dents de Chien 2018

£250.00 (12)

The vineyard borders Puligny 1er Garenne. It is named after the tooth like stones that form the gate posts. This is a Handford favourite and is possibly the best I've ever tried. Pure, clear and focussed nose of tangerine peel, citrus flower and with spritzy, orange and grapefruit notes on the palate. Great tension, but without shutting down the fruits at all. This will drink well now and age for 5 years or more. There is approximately one new barrel in five on all the 1er Cru wines, but it doesn't at all impact the taste. 2019 to 2025.

Saint Aubin 1er Cru la Chateniere 2018

£260.00 (12)

Down the slope, and close to chez Thomas at the southern end of the village, the vineyard is named for the wild cats that bask in the warmth of this sun trap on the lower slopes. The terraces were constructed by Gerard's own hand, though many years ago now. Lush, voluptuous stone fruits. this is more smoky, sultry and brooding. Apricot skin aromatics build on the nose and palate suggesting this will evolve well with a year or two in bottle. As I said last year, the 'cat' should sleep a while. 2022 to 2026.

Chassagne Montrachet 1er Cru les Chenevottes 2018

£365.00 (12)

The vineyard is mid slope and at the St Aubin end of Chassagne. This is tough, stony, loamy site that faces east and a bit north. Like the Chateniere there are a lot of guts to this more long term white. This time though there is a marked tension to the lime and stephanotis notes. There are many layers and, I suspect, much to come from this tiny plot. 2023 to 2029

Puligny Montrachet 1er Cru la Garenne 2018**£395.00 (12)**

High up on the hillside, and virtually contiguous to the Murgers des Dents de Chien vineyard of Saint Aubin, this offers something of everything. Density, pure mineral character, clementine, delicate white flower, even a little soft raspberry. There's a little step up in purity, balance and richesse. All is in perfect balance and with a verve that will brighten your day. This is the best Garenne I have tasted here in 25 years or so. It is likely to be one of the many smart buys of this great 2018 vintage. 2023 to 2028.

Domaine de Meix Foulot, Mercurey

I do love popping in to see Agnes de Launey and her fabulous dog. She is so diligent in her hospitality, her sense of collaboration with the vineyards and the familial devotion that continues the great and pioneering works of her father, Paul, not just for the domaine, but for the appellation of Mercurey.

**Mercurey 1er Cru Montaigu Monopole 2018****£115.00**

The king of the Meix-Foulot cellar, unfurling in the glass with a complex bouquet of ripe cherries, wild black berries and hints of wild strawberry. The palate texture is super sleek and polished with a medium bodied weight but the most impressive intensity and purity accompanied by beautiful structural elegance and fine grained tannins that are largely enveloped but a juicy core of fruit concentration. A very good effort indeed. 2022 to 2029

**Please call 020 7589 6113 for more advice, or e-mail james@handford.net or
greg@handford.net**

James Handford MW and Greg Sherwood MW