



From *Terroir* to **Climats**

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

Du *Terroir* aux Climats



BOURGOGNES

2000 years of heritage



Two people have a chance encounter in one of the principal tourist attractions in the capital of the Bourgogne wine region; the Hospices de Beaune.

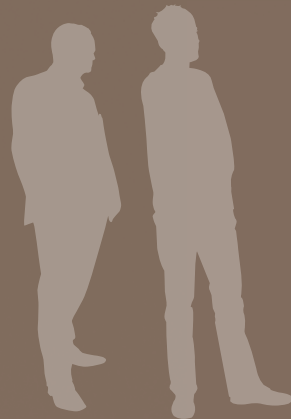


The first, **Jacques, is a great lover of Bourgogne wines.** Once a year, he makes a pilgrimage to the region to rediscover the aromas of the land which gives life to the wines he loves so much. For years, he has been coming to sample the effect of the various *terroirs*, and his knowledge is the result of these experiences. He no longer looks for the *terroir*; the *terroirs* open themselves up to him.

The second, **Romain, is visiting Bourgogne for the first time.** A wine, tasted with a friend, inspired him to find out more, and prompted him to come to the region. In Jacques, he stumbles upon a helpful guide in his search for knowledge. Their encounter will enable him to grasp the alchemy and the richness of the *terroirs* of Bourgogne.

The two men find themselves in the Salle des Pôvres, at opposite ends of the huge hall. Jacques is contemplating the place, rather than visiting it.

Romain is studying the architecture down to the smallest detail of the hall. Puzzled, he ends up approaching Jacques.



Hospices de Beaune - Autumn

Romain: Excuse me, sir, may I ask you something? You look as though you know about this place.

Jacques: Yes, of course, how can I help?

Romain: I heard that the **Hospices de Beaune** was founded to help the sick. It has been financed since its creation by donations. Do you know when the first plot of vines was donated?

Jacques: Yes. Jean Plampays and his wife made the first donation in 1459. This was followed by many other donations down the centuries to fund the charitable work of the Hospices.

Romain: Thank you. The history of this place is truly fascinating.

Jacques: Delighted to have enlightened you. It seemed quite important to you!

Romain: *(smiling)* For someone with the ambition of discovering the secrets of the *terroirs* of Bourgogne wines, everything is important!

Jacques: That's a wonderful ambition. *(he resumes strolling around the Salle des Pôvres, with an amused air)* Because the *terroir* testifies to continual vitality and movement. Some even find the term indefinable, because it never ceases to evolve.

Romain: *(intrigued)* A term without a fixed definition? That doesn't seem to bother you especially. *(following Jacques)*

Jacques: True, but I was once like you. I wanted to learn everything and explain everything.

Romain: And what happened?

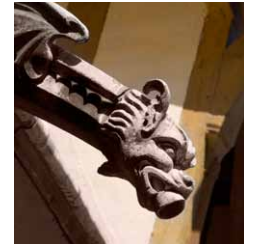
Jacques: I learned to enjoy rather than learn; to listen rather than ask questions; to meditate rather than analyze; to taste, to breathe, to feel...

The Bourgogne *terroirs* are an endless experience, always refreshing and surprising. Who would turn down the pleasure of an eternal voyage of discovery?

Hospices de Beaune

In 1443, the chancellor of Philippe le Bon, Nicolas Rolin ...

for further info ►



rich, complexe soil

Terroir

According to the Cultural Dictionary ...

for further info ▶

Romain: An eternal discovery? In what way?

Jacques: *(amused by the visitor's great curiosity)* It's a long story, but if you have a moment, I can tell you a little about it.

Romain: *(disappointed)* Only a little?

Jacques: *(he smiles)* The Burgundian experience cannot be recounted; it has to be lived out!

Romain: Will I then know what are the **terroirs** of the wines of Bourgogne?

“ Unique in the plant kingdom, the vine makes the true value of the land **intelligible** for us. How faithfully it translates this! It absorbs and then expresses through the bunch the secrets of the soil: flint, through the vine, lets us know that it is lively, gentle, and nourishing; whilst unfor-giving chalk makes wine weep tears of gold. ”

Colette



Jacques: You will at least have an initial understanding. Let's start with geography. What do you know about the **regional geography** and its characteristics? And what it transmits to the vines?

Romain: Well, not much, I must confess.

Jacques: How about we discuss it over a good meal?



A bit of geography

Some 200 million years ago, in the Mesozoic era, ...

for further info ▶

A specific type of meteorology



Restaurant in Beaune - Much later...

- Romain:** (*sated*) It's delicious! I might even forget the purpose of my trip.
- Jacques:** On the contrary, you have already learnt something about the *terroirs* of Bourgogne wines.
- Romain:** (*amazed*) By eating poached eggs *en meurette*?
- Jacques:** Yes, because it expresses one of the character traits of the Burgundians, fundamental in their approach to vine and wine.
- Romain:** Meaning?
- Jacques:** The egg is a simple foodstuff, yet its quality, mastering the method and time of cooking, the recipes, and the cook himself all determine whether it is a success or not. **It is the quest for excellence in the guise of apparent simplicity.**
- Romain:** Yes, that's true. Alright, I can see that you don't believe the geography or the **geology** play any role in understanding the *terroirs* of Bourgogne wines.
- Jacques:** That's not what I said at all! I said it was obviously an essential factor, because without those physical conditions, no vines would ever have been planted. But if you look at it more closely, all those conditions are far from ideal in Bourgogne.
- Romain:** (*surprised*) But aren't slopes oriented towards the south or east with a draining slope advantages for vines?

Geological
section...

for further info ►

- Jacques:** Yes, but what do you do about the constant slipping of the soil down the slope? And what about this climate?
- Romain:** Allow me to remind you that there are more northerly vines
- Jacques:** (*sipping his coffee*) Yes, but with different **climatic** conditions. What's more, the Burgundians, as seasoned cultivators, know that variations in the weather are important.
- Romain:** Why do you say "as good cultivators"? They're not farmers!
- Jacques:** Yes and no. (*putting down his coffee*) The people here love their land, and are strongly attached to it. Everything is based on the land, and methods of maintaining it, cultivating it, making it bear fruit, magnifying it.
- Romain:** I see. And what's that got to do with the weather?
- Jacques:** One more fundamental point; the vine is very sensitive to soil type, but also to variations in temperature, changes in wind direction and precipitation.
- Romain:** Sure, but all that can be corrected in the cellar, right?
- Jacques:** (*he leans towards Romain*) Well, no, in fact. Wine growers respect the effects of the climate just as they respect the effects of the soil. They consider that they are natural phenomena, which they must deal with; instead of trying to negate them. On the contrary, they aim to reflect them in the wine.

Continental

with nuances

The Bourgogne climate is relatively temperate...

for further info ►



2000 years building a terroir



Romain: Is that why wine is never the same from one year to the next?

Jacques: Exactly. That's what is known as the vintage effect.

Romain: So then, there's no true expression of *terroir*, if the wine that it produces is dependent on climatic conditions.

Jacques: *(pausing for a moment)* Yes, of course there is! And the changing effects of the climate add a fascinating temporal dimension to it, don't you think? *(changing tack)* Did you know that *Climat* has a second, very important meaning in Bourgogne?

Romain: It does?

Jacques: A ***Climat of Bourgogne*** is what would be called elsewhere a specific named place or a plot. You might say a piece of land. It's the ultimate expression of the *terroir*.

Romain: Another Bourgogne curiosity... All this is not exactly simple.

Jacques: Simple? My dear Romain, you're talking about a notion that has little currency in Bourgogne.

Romain: I'm starting to realize that. And I suppose you have a logical explanation for this complexity?

Jacques: Perhaps not logical. I'm not even sure I understand why the Burgundians are so persistent.

Romain: What do you mean, persistent?

Jacques: It takes a great deal of perseverance and drive – perhaps even a degree of folly – to share the collective ambition of producing the best wines in the world. But it's too late to go into that tonight. What are your plans for tomorrow?

Romain: I'd like to go and visit some vineyards; Vosne-Romanée, for example.

Jacques: I don't have any plans for tomorrow. If you like, we could meet in front of the church at 9 am.

Les Climats

of the Bourgogne wine region

The term *Climats* is unique to Bourgogne. It is the Burgundian ...

for further info ►



noble grape **varietals**

Two great Bourgogne

varietals

The wines of Bourgogne are mainly “monovarietal”, ...

en savoir plus >

Vosne Romanée - A glorious autumnal morning

- Jacques:** Hello, Romain. What a beautiful day.
- Romain:** Hello, Jacques. Yes, it's magnificent. But I have to say, very cold.
- Jacques:** That's true. So let's get moving! Follow me.
(They head off along a path through the vines)
- Romain:** *(shivering)* I read somewhere that the vine is a Mediterranean plant; how does it cope with this cold?
- Jacques:** *(laughing)* When I mentioned persistence yesterday, that's what I meant: the fact that it is possible to grow vines here, but that it's not necessarily an ideal place. The terrain is variable, and the climate is cool. And especially because they chose to favor **monovarietal** wines.

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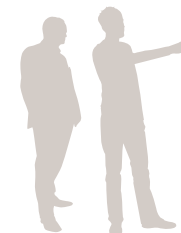
[The Pinot] brings with it an unrivalled notion of excellence, of supreme dignity, which means that one can find no equivalent outside the wine region of Beaune.

”

Roger Dion in *Histoire de la Vigne et du Vin en France des Origines au XIX^{ème} Siècle*
Flammarion 1959 – Reprinted 1982

- Jacques:** And I know a certain number of wine lovers who are delighted about that. The *terroirs* and wines of Bourgogne are already not easy to grasp; can you imagine if they mixed up varietals?

- Romain:** *(puffing to keep up with Jacques, who is striding confidently through the vines)* Nonetheless, one single grape variety means depriving oneself of the possibility to compensate the weaknesses of one *(he puffs)* with the strengths of another.
- Jacques:** *(stopping in front of a low wall)* Or trusting in the alliance between the grape, the soil and the work of the winemaker. In Bourgogne, it is close to perfection.
- Romain:** Is that Romanée-Conti?
- Jacques:** Indeed it is, right in front of you.
- Romain:** *(he seems put out)* I didn't think it would look like that.
- Jacques:** *(intrigued)* Are you disappointed?
- Romain:** No, not at all. But this wall doesn't fit in with my theory.



noble grape varieties

A shared approach

to preserve the environment

The Bourgogne wine region has undergone continual changes over the centuries. Some 30 years ago

for further info >

Bourgogne grape varieties

Chardonnay	46%
Pinot Noir	36%
Gamay	7,5%
Aligoté	6%
Misc.	4,5 %

Jacques: *(once again amused)* Ah, you have a theory and you didn't mention it to me? I'm listening.

Romain: *(he clears his throat, slightly intimidated)* My theory is that as far as *terroir* is concerned, it's nature that decides *(he stops, Jacques continues looking at him, then resumes)*. So this wall...

Jacques: This wall, which indicates **man's intervention**, doesn't suit you, I can see that. Did you know that these walls often surround what are known as *clos*?

Romain: Like the Clos de Vougeot?

Jacques: Exactly, and I imagine you know why.

Romain: *(with undisguised joy)* Yes, that I do know! *(as if reciting a lesson)* That comes from the Latin *clausum*, and it was the word naturally employed by the Burgundians, then by the monks in the Middle Ages to describe the places that they enclosed. And in Bourgogne it has remained linked to the culture of wine.

Jacques: *(benevolently)* You have a theory, and you know what a *clos* is; you're not such a novice in the discovery of the *terroirs* of Bourgogne wines.

Romain: Nonetheless, how does nature affect *terroir*?

Jacques: If you'd like to follow me, you'll see that it plays its role, too. *(A little higher in the vines, Jacques stops and turns round)*

From here, you can see the sun's rays strike at an ideal angle on these few *ouvrées** which produce Romanée-Conti. And when you think that below the ground is a specific limestone, you can see the difference with the adjacent plot where the subsoil is composed of marl and limestone.

Romain: And what's that, just in front of us?

Jacques: It's La Tâche.



*An *ouvrée* is 428 m².

Innovation

without revolution

The cultural practices in Bourgogne are renowned for their gentleness. ...

for further info ▶

Romain: And it's not the same. I don't know why, but the color of the earth, the slope, yes, it's different.

Jacques: You see! But if you look closely, what do you see?

Romain: Men at work, bent over the vines. It's so pleasant, just watching! Here, it's golden. There it's buttercup yellow, and... Look, there's a group down there. What are they up to?

Jacques: They're talking. They're sharing their experiences, wondering about the weather, the vinification underway. They'll be at it for hours.



Romain: That must be fascinating.

Jacques: I can see that you're won over.

Romain: Enchanted! It's wonderful! I feel like I'm looking out over a swathe of Japanese micro-gardens, each tended with care; original yet similar, harmonious in their apparent chaos, with a whiff of – and this may seem exaggerated – a whiff of eternity.

Jacques: Don't forget that all this represents a lot of work, continual effort for century after century. Some here call it the work of memory. There is nature, but it is overlaid by the labors of man: the trees, the land, structured by the paths and the *clos*. And as you can see, this incessant activity continues.

Romain: Let's go and get some lunch: I'm buying. You can tell me the rest of the story.



As the seasons pass, the work in the vines changes: from harvesting to burning the prunings, and from tending up the vines to transplanting.

Châlon-sur-Saône - Restaurant - Early afternoon

Romain : You have given me a wonderful account of the history of mythical Bourgogne.

Jacques: But it's not a myth, it's all quite true. What's more, looking at how you polished off that last glass...



2000 years

of wine culture

During the summer of 2008, a team from the National Institute of Preventive ...

for further info >

Romain: *(Romain interrupts him)*

I love comments like, "We are a link that runs through the *terroir*, we strive to improve on it, we change things a little and pass it onto the next generation. The stronger the link is, the better we can preserve the *terroir*."

Autun bears early

record of Côte de Beaune

The first written evidence of the presences of vines in Bourgogne ...

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Jacques: You no longer seem convinced that only nature is praiseworthy, Romain.

Romain: You're right. I feel even more intimidated than before by these *terroirs* and more still by these women and men who have been making this wine for so many generations.

Jacques: They may well be *terroirists*, but they don't bite!

Romain: *Terroirists?*

Jacques: That's the name given to them sometimes. But don't worry, they have opened their doors to me, and they'll do the same for you. They want to share their passion. Talking of which, here is the address of a winemaker who would be delighted to welcome you during your stay in Mâcon.



Tying down

Romain's hotel - Mâcon

Romain: *(in his hotel room, Romain ponders)*
 The *terroirs* of the wines of Bourgogne, so subtle to define.
(placing his books in a corner of the room)
 It's true, there are hills facing the sun and clay-limestone soils. But why Pinot Noir? Why Chardonnay? Why all this time?
(picking up one of the books)
 Jacques would say that it's all down to man's will. You have to admit, they had to really work hard at it. They still do! To succeed in bringing out in the wine simultaneously the geography of a region, its geology, the expression of a *Climat*, and a collective and personal history...

“ The terroir does not only influence the wine, it no doubt also has a tangential effect on mentalities. Winemakers who down the centuries have led a continual quest for the smallest common denominator – isolating a plot the size of a garden in the belief that on the other side of the ditch it's not the same – does not fit in to military alignment under the banner of simplicity

”

Jacques Dupont in *Choses Bues* – Grasset – 2008

These *terroirs* still to be discovered...

The wines of Bourgogne are the result of complex alliances between geological, geographic, climatic, technical, cultural, historical and human factors, each with their own particularities. These are the **terroirs of the wines of Bourgogne**. *Terroirs* in the plural, since it is undeniable that the diversity of these factors is expressed, thanks to the workings of man, in the multiplicity of Bourgogne wines that hail from an incomparable patchwork. The winemakers of Bourgogne are aware of this heritage, and whilst remaining innovative without being revolutionary, they collectively pursue this quest for balance between the natural and the human which gives their wines the magnificence that delights wine-lovers the world over. This is the best proof there could be of the existence of the *terroirs* of the wines of Bourgogne.

Acknowledgements ►►

Bibliography ►►





In 1443, the chancellor of **Philippe le Bon, Nicolas Rolin** and his wife **Guigone de Salins** founded a hospital in Beaune for the poor and the sick: l'**Hôtel-Dieu**.

Today, it is a symbolic site in Bourgogne. Its **roof of colored tiles** and the **Salle des Pôvres** (or Great Hall) are known throughout the world. The Hôtel-Dieu is part of an ensemble, known as Les Hospices de Beaune, which comprises a hospital, various social structures and a wine estate. Since its origins, the production from this estate has financed the Hospices, through a **wine auction** which has been held every year, since 1859, on the third Sunday in November.





According to the Cultural Dictionary of the French Language, the word *terroir* comes from the Roman word *terratorium*, which is a deformation of the word *territorium*, or territory.

The term *terroir* appeared in literature for the first time from the pen of Corneille in 1643, in his play *Cinna*: "Go and apply my laws to this fertile *terroir*".

The Robert dictionary notes its appearance in 1246, and today gives its definition as: "A fairly limited stretch of land, considered from the point of view of its agricultural qualities and suitability".



In wine-growing culture, this refers to all the natural elements (geographical, geological, pedological*, vegetal, climatic) that, combined with human action, give a specific product that cannot be reproduced outside these conditions.

The definition of the *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*, like the *Appellation d'Origine Protégée*, is very close to this concept.

**Pedology is the study of the structure and functioning of soils, their properties, their distribution in space and evolution over time.*

A tropical sea

Some 200 million years ago, in the Mesozoic era, sea covered practically all of modern mainland France. This warm, tropical sea was favorable for the development of coral and more generally for limestone deposits. It is this limestone which today is found in the sub-soils of Bourgogne, sometimes in the form of fossilized shellfish.

The upheaval of the Tertiary

Around 65 million years ago, the sea gradually withdrew. Erosion led to the appearance of valleys and clay-limestone soils. This apparently calm movement was the prelude to a monumental upheaval: the creation of the Alps. Pushed by the African plate, the granite bedrock was raised up to produce the Mont-Blanc range and the Massif Central. Smaller upwards movements and breaks (faults), from the north to the south, gradually formed the landscape we see today between Dijon and the hills of the Mâcon region. To the northwest, the phenomena were less violent and the layers were simply deformed into a bowl shape, providing the *cuesta* relief of the Paris basin.

The patient work of Quaternary erosion

The major glacial periods gradually eroded the slopes created by the faults to form *cuestas*; in other words, the *côtes*.

From Chablis to the Mâcon region, all the lands where the vineyards of Bourgogne flourish are located on these hills. Their incline allows for the natural drainage that is so important for the development of the vine.

Hills facing the sun

From Chablis to Mâcon, the vineyards of Bourgogne are planted on hills oriented eastwards or southeast. This favorable aspect allows them to benefit from the morning sun, which is longer and gentler during the long winter months, and to avoid damage from frost.

Geological layers dominated by marl and limestone

The geological composition of the soil in Bourgogne reflects both its marine origins and its geological history. Depending on the location, there is one or more layers of material, more or less similar in terms of composition. The alternating layers of marl and limestone explains the contrasting soil types within a relatively limited geographical area, although 95% of the soils are clay-limestone.

It's a regular *mille-feuille*. For example, in Vosne-Romanée, at the foot of the slopes, one finds marl and conglomerates; at mid-point there are limestones known as *crinoïdal*; then a little higher up, at the level of Romanée-Conti, one finds the limestone of Premeaux. Between these two limestones exists a thin layer of marl with *Ostrea acuminata*, or fossilized oysters. Finally, at the top of the slope, the soil is white oolite.



The special case of the Kimmeridgian

This particular limestone formed in the Jurassic era (between 200 and 145 million years ago) is notable for the existence of small oyster fossils, now highly prized and known as *Exogyra virgula*. It is on this singular limestone that the vineyards of Chablis are planted.

Two rivers

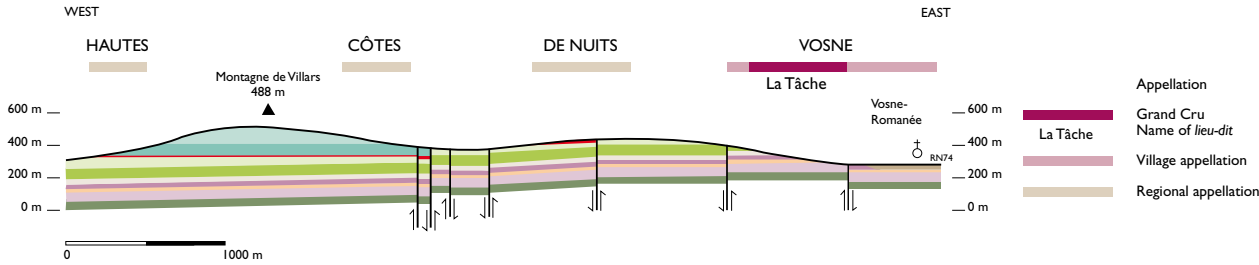
The presence of the Yonne to the north and the Saône to the east seems to confirm the theory according to which all great wine regions are to be found near a river. Transport by the waterways was, actually, an asset for the wine trade. The presence of the two rivers was one of the elements which allowed Bourgogne to export its wines outside the region.

Geological section

for further info...

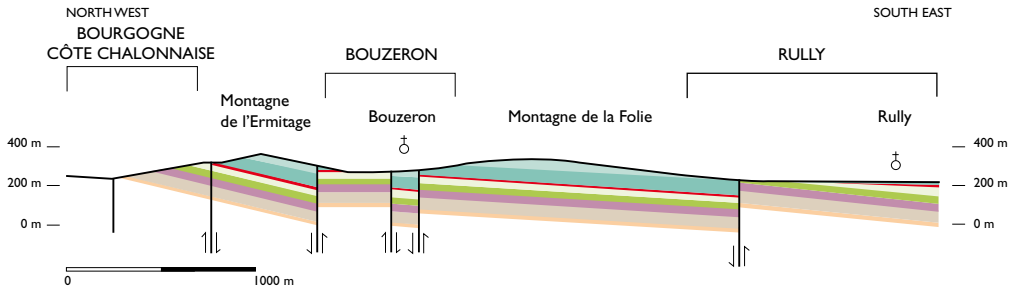
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GEOLOGICAL CROSS-SECTION OF THE CÔTE DE NUITS AND THE HAUTES CÔTES DE NUITS



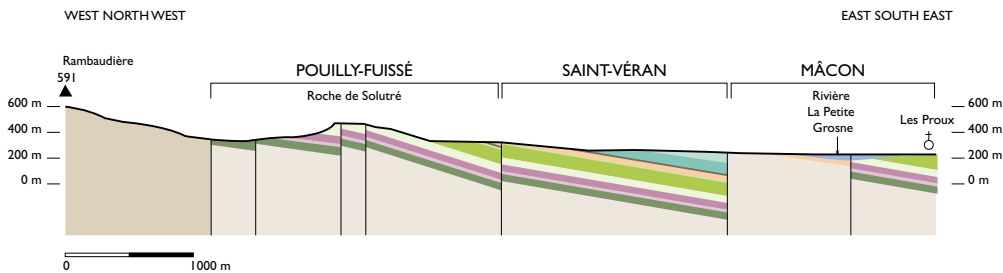
OLIGOCENE	Salmon conglomerate		
UPPER JURASSIC	Compact Vergy limestone	Villars marl	
	Ferruginous oolite		
MIDDLE JURASSIC	Corton and Ladoix limestone	Comblanchien limestone	White oolite
	Premeaux chert limestone	<i>Ostrea acuminata</i> marl	Crinoidal limestone
LOWER JURASSIC	Sandy marl		

GEOLOGICAL CROSS-SECTION OF THE CÔTE CHALONNAISE



UPPER JURASSIC	Nantoux limestone	White Chagny marl
	Ferruginous oolite	
MIDDLE JURASSIC	Corton and Ladoix limestone	Comblanchien limestone
	<i>Pholadomya Bellona</i> marl	Chassagne limestone
	<i>Ostrea acuminata</i> marl	

GEOLOGICAL CROSS-SECTION OF THE MONTS DU MÂCONNAIS



UPPER JURASSIC	Lérimy limestone	Black and gray marl	
MIDDLE JURASSIC	Dalle nacre	Pholadomya marl	Grayish limestone
	Crinoidal limestone		Davayé marl
LOWER JURASSIC	Marl	Gryphea limestone	
TRAIIS	Sandstone and clay		
BEDROCK	Microgranite	Rhyolite	

Continental...

for further info...

Continental with nuances...

The Bourgogne climate is relatively temperate, with significant variations from year to year. The region's vineyards are located in zones that tend to be warmer, and more or less dry. Two main sub-regions can be identified.

Two great sub-regions

► In the southeast, the main sub-region is located on the western edge of the Saône flood plain and enjoys the warmest, driest climate of the whole region.

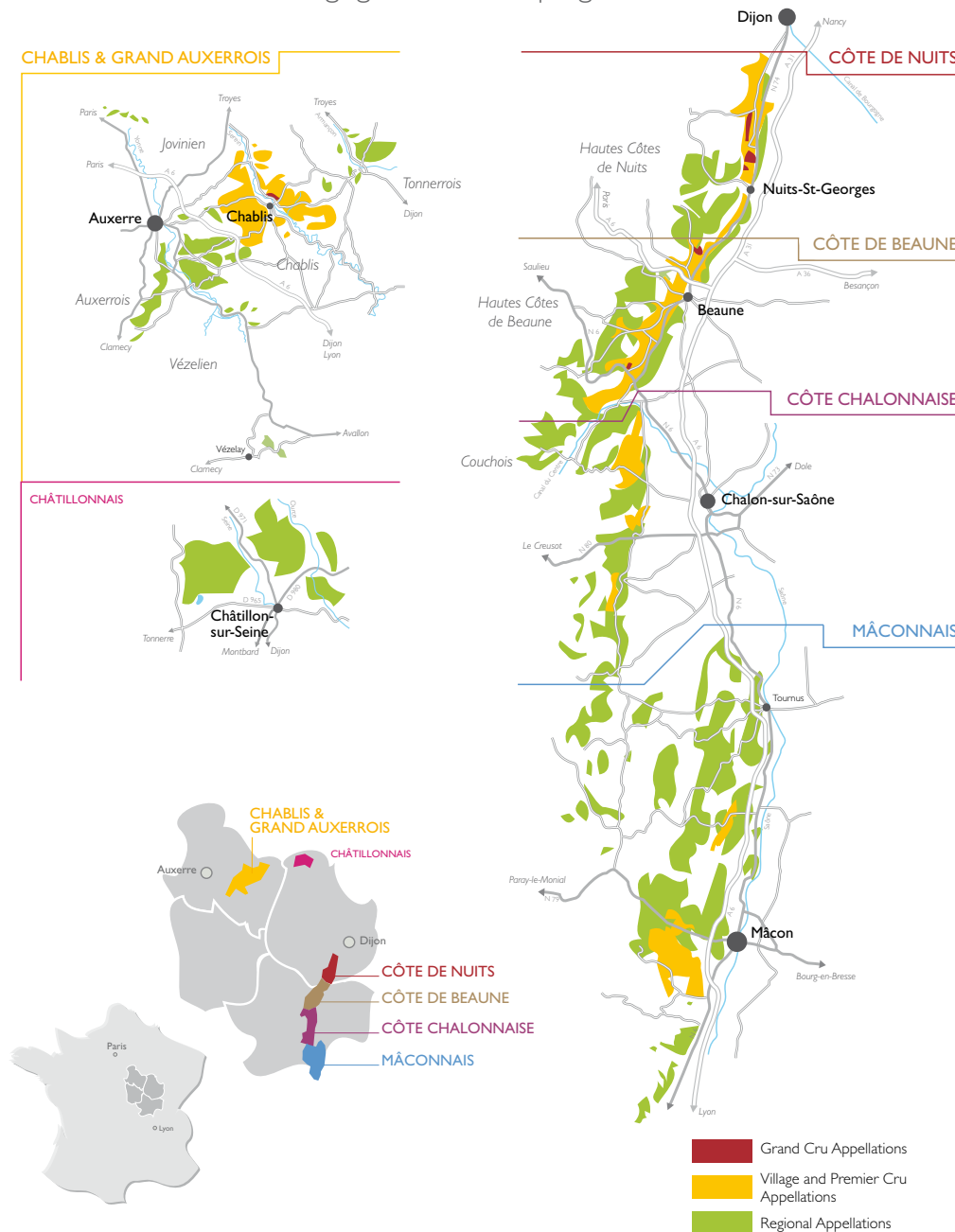
Its sectors in the Côte-d'Or and Saône-et-Loire *départements* profit from a triple effect on a general and regional scale: a relatively southerly latitude, a longitude open to the south which allows Mediterranean influences to come up the Saône-Rhone corridor, and a sheltered position from the cool and damp winds from the west.

► The second sub-region to the northwest, in the Yonne and the Nièvre *département*, is on the threshold of Bourgogne, and also on a threshold of risk, notably in terms of spring frosts. But locally, the regional conditions of relief and latitude render winegrowing possible.

The vineyards are kept to the major river valleys, at the points where they cut through one of the ridges of the cuestas of the Paris basin: the Armançon (the Tonnerre region), the Serein (the Chablis region), and the Yonne (the Auxerre region).

Positioned in relative hollows, their slopes are better protected to the west. These then form warm, dry climatic islands in a sector of the Paris basin which is on the limit of the growing zone for vines.

Bourgogne and its five wine-producing regions
La Bourgogne et ses cinq régions viticoles



The *Climats*

for further info...

The *Climats* of the Bourgogne wine region

The term *Climats* is unique to Bourgogne. It is the Burgundian expression of the notion of *terroir*. *Climats* are precisely delimited plots that enjoy particular geological and climatic conditions. When combined with traditional working practices and translated by the two grape varieties – Pinot Noir and Chardonnay – these elements have given rise to an extraordinary patchwork of world renowned wines, ranked according to a hierarchy. There are several thousand *Climats* in Bourgogne.

Climats down the centuries

As early as the 7th century, certain famous wines were recognized and recorded, such as the *Clos de Bèze* in Gevrey-Chambertin. Over the course of several centuries, the reputation of Bourgogne wines spread thanks to the influence of the monks of Cîteaux and later the Dukes of Bourgogne. Certain wines, designated by the name of the *Climat* where they were grown, acquired a reputation that reached beyond French borders, such as Clos de Vougeot and Montrachet.

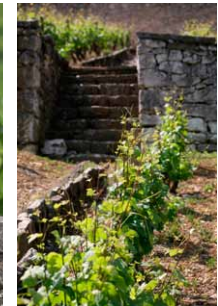
From 1935, the INAO (National Institute of Origin and Quality) made the use of the term *Climat* official and used it in regulatory documents for all Bourgogne appellations, whatever their hierarchical ranking.

Some examples of *Climats*

- The *Climat* Montrachet, classified as a Grand Cru, whose territory covers parts of both Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet on the Côte de Beaune
- The *Climat* Clos du Château de Montaigu, a Mercurey Premier Cru on the Côte Chalonnaise
- The *Climat* Ménétrière in Fuissé, a Village appellation in the Mâcon region
- The *Climat* Côte Saint-Jacques, in the commune of Joigny within the Jovinien Regional “Bourgogne” appellation

What about the *lieux-dits*?

Ever since the creation of the land registry in France, the *lieu-dit* refers to a small area of land whose name recalls a specific aspect of topographical or historical nature. However, for a long time, the terms *Climats* and *lieux-dits* have been employed interchangeably in Burgundian usage. There are, nevertheless, some differences in reality. For example, several *lieux-dits* may be found within a single *Climat* or a *Climat* may cover only part of a *lieu-dit*.



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Two great varieties

for further info...

The two great Bourgogne varieties

The wines of Bourgogne are mainly “monovarietal”, meaning they are each produced from a single grape variety. This gives them great purity of expression. Bourgogne wines are thus among the rare fine wines which do not employ the blending of different grape varieties.

The red wines of Bourgogne are made from Pinot Noir (36% of total production), or Gamay (7.5%).

The white wines of Bourgogne come from either Chardonnay (46%) or Aligoté (6%).

The Bourgogne vineyard remains the absolute benchmark for the production of great Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

The **Pinot Noir** grape is considered to be a varietal that is very close to the wild varieties of vine. It has had various names over the centuries (*Avernat, Morillon, Noirien*) and its precise origins are unknown. It has been considered the quintessential Bourgogne grape variety since the 14th century. It is generally described as thankless, temperamental, high-maintenance and highly sensitive to variations in the soil. It is precisely in Bourgogne that it is most at home, where it can faithfully reflect the infinite diversity of the pedologic* combinations.



**Pedology is the study of the structure and functioning of soils, their properties, their distribution in space and evolution over time.*

The Chardonnay grape is also closely associated with Bourgogne, but is now widely cultivated elsewhere in the world. Its apparent simplicity is contradicted by the diversity of white wines which it produces in Bourgogne, from Chablis to Mâcon, passing through Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet on the way.



These two varieties are thought to be of local origin, which would explain their admirable adaptation to the specific conditions in the region.

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A shared approach to preserve the environment

The Bourgogne wine region has undergone continual changes over the centuries. Some 30 years ago, a common movement emerged among the winemakers of Bourgogne to shift towards gentler practices. Some chose organic certification, others opted for biodynamic practices, sustainable culture or a return to the ways of their ancestors, as preserved in family books. But whichever path they chose, the aim was to inject vitality back into the land. Together, they began working towards a philosophy of sustainable winegrowing.





Innovation without revolution

The cultural practices in Bourgogne are renowned for their gentleness. Some would even call them intuitive. A wine region that is split into small plots, yet at the same time geographically bunched close together, Bourgogne has always had a way of working very close to that of the farmer, with a deep concern for the land and the plants ahead of the cellar.

Little influenced by trends, the Burgundians have integrated new methods with the passage of time, whilst as far as possible avoiding sudden upheavals. The negative side of this attachment to the methods passed down by previous generations was that they were the last to tackle the phylloxera epidemic which began in 1863, by adopting American root stocks.

The positive side of this obsession meant fewer Bourgogne wine-makers were tempted by the post-war productivist tendencies than in other wine regions.

Nowadays, this proximity with the land which remains their trademark has turned out to be in phase with changes in modern viticulture – a shift towards gentler methods with greater respect for the balance in the soils and plants.



2000 years

for further info...



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2000 years of wine culture

During the summer of 2008, a team from the National Institute of Preventive Archeological Research (INRAP) discovered traces of a plantation which, following analysis by a CNRS team at the University of Bourgogne headed by Jean-Pierre Garcia, revealed vestiges of an ancient vineyard. The plot, enclosed by a wall and located close to Gevrey-Chambertin, is made up of 27 rows of vines and 400 plantation trenches. Their alignment, their scale and their layout, in accordance with the agronomic precepts of Columelle (1st century A.D.) and Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.), along with fragments of pottery, allowed this vineyard to be dated to between the 1st and 2nd century A.D. It amounts to an amazing testimony to the presence of vines in Bourgogne since antiquity.



Autun bears early record of Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits

The first written evidence of the presences of vines in Bourgogne dates from the 4th century. On the occasion of a visit by the Roman emperor Constantin in 312 A.D. to Autun, capital of the people of Aedui*, he pronounced a speech. He paid tribute to the reputed vineyard of *Pagus Arebrignus*. The writer of this panegyric deplored the poor state of the vines, which was said to be linked to their great age. We will never know whether this lamentation was genuine or merely designed to hide the reality of the vineyards wealth from the tax authorities of the day.



Cluny and Cîteaux create an exceptional wine region

At the turn of the first millennium, all Europe lived according to Christian rites. It was in Bourgogne that two rival monastic movements emerged as models for many centuries to come. In Cluny, a Benedictine abbey was founded in 909 which went on to spawn 1,400 offshoots and which became the center of contemporary Christianity. Meanwhile, in 1098, Friar Robert created the first Cistercian abbey in Cîteaux, as a reaction to the slackening of the Rule of Benedict. The abbey owed its expansion to the dynamic approach of Saint Bernard, eventually counting 400 sister abbeys. The strict “prayer and work” lifestyle imposed by Saint Bernard, based around effort, perhaps explains the phenomenal labors carried out by the monks to improve the land they owned. Applying rigorous vinification methods, noting down everything they tested, comparing grape varieties and different plots, and taking samples during frosts, they greatly contributed to the reputation and the preservation of the *terroirs* of the wines of Bourgogne.

Pinot Noir, the choice of the Dukes of Bourgogne

In 1356, Philippe de Valois, aged just 14, covered himself in glory at the Battle of Poitiers. His father, the king of France, Jean Le Bon, gave him the soubriquet “the Bold”, and rewarded him with Bourgogne: a gift which the House of Valois turned into a powerful empire. By marrying Margaret of Flanders, Philippe the Bold became the head of a sizeable territory that ran as far modern-day Belgium. Personally overseeing the vineyards in Bourgogne, he soon became the best ambassador for the wine, both within his own territory in Artois and in Flanders. He notably with his father-in-law, in Avignon at the papal palace, and even in Paris. It is said that in 1395, when staying for several months in the city, he organized sumptuous dinners at which only the wines of Beaune were served: 800 hectoliters in total, or the equivalent of 104,000 bottles.



Philippe the Bold will above all be remembered as he who drove Gamay out of Bourgogne by an edict of 1395, to the benefit of the *Noirien*, which had first appeared in the archives a few years previously (1375). It was later renamed Pinot Noir. He based his initiative mainly on health grounds, arguing that wine is “the best, most precious and most pleasant nourishment and sustenance for the human creature”. This edict was more closely observed on the Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits than in other wine regions, which explains why Gamay is still present in Bourgogne in the 21st century. Nonetheless, he had launched two movements which his descendants maintained: the preference for Pinot Noir, and the engagement of the ducal house in the promotion of the wines. These two movements continued up until the extinction of the House of Bourgogne with the death of Charles the Rash in 1477.

**The Aedui were a people of Celtic Gaul who settled in what are now the French departments of Saône-et-Loire and Nièvre. Their capital was Bibracte. They were allies of the Romans who thought of them as blood brothers.*

The Burgundians reinvent their traditions

The renowned conviviality of the people of Bourgogne perhaps stems from their exchanges with the inhabitants of Artois and Flanders. Those are reputed for their festive customs, which can still be admired today in the paintings of Bruegel. In reality, it was at the start of the 20th century that, several wine growers took the initiative to found the major festivals dedicated to Bourgogne wines.

The first event created was the Paulée of Meursault in 1923, on the initiative of Jules Lafon, owner of the Domaine Comte Lafon, with the backing of Gaston Gérard, the radical MP for Dijon, and Jacques Prieur, owner in Meursault. It was a rapid success. From 35 attendees in the first year, the number of guests grew to 300 in 1928 to reach an average of around 700 nowadays. It spread to New York, where every year since 2000, in homage to its counterpart in Meursault, the Paulée of New York is held.

In 1934, Camille Rodier, co-owner of the Clos des Lambrays, and Georges Faiveley, owner of the estate which bears his name, founded the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin (the Brotherhood of the Knights of Wine-Tasting Cups*). Drawing inspiration from both medieval tales of chivalry, and from Molière and Rabelais, the founders of the Confrérie set out to act "in favor of the great wines of France in general, and those of Bourgogne in particular". The brotherhood today numbers some 10,000 members worldwide and has its base at the Château du Clos Vougeot, where its tasting events are held. It is also behind the Saint-Vincent Tournante of Bourgogne annual wine festival. The Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin provided a template for similar organizations in other wine regions, as well as for those who defend others products, such as Brie de Meaux cheese.



A new era: the winegrowing guilds, the classifications, and the AOC (*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*)

From the 18th century onwards, driven by a major literary and encyclopedic movement, several works were published describing the wine regions of France. In the case of Bourgogne, the Abbot Arnoux, Courtépée, Dom Denise and even Thomas Jefferson, future President of the United States, gave special mention to certain *Climats* or plots producing wines of exceptional quality. This intellectual desire to distinguish with ever-increasing precision the wines by their *terroir* became more formalized in 19th century, when hierarchies were established. This led to the establishment in 1860 by the Comité d'Agriculture et de Viticulture de Beaune of a plan to classify the plots of the Côte-d'Or wine region into four categories: *tête de cuvée*, *première cuvée*, *deuxième cuvée* and *troisième cuvée*.



The aim was to present a snapshot of the patchwork of Bourgogne *Climats* at the Great London Exposition in 1862. But following the ravages of phylloxera, successive slumps in sales weakened the wine region. Organized into winemaking guilds, backed by high-profile figures, and bolstered by their membership of the Confederation of Bourgogne Winemaking Associations (CGAVB), the wine growers then sought to promote the norms of production and sale of wines based on underlining the notion of origin, and not the blending of wines – a practice widely used in the wine trade at the time. Thanks to a law of 6 May 1919 which defined the *Appellations d'Origine* as "the expression of local methods, faithful and constant", the Bourgogne winemakers thereby succeeded in proving the historical validity of the classifications established during the 18th and 19th centuries. This long historical battle finally resulted in the formalization, within the framework of the AOC (a legal expression covering the norms of *terroir*), of a unique definition of the *terroirs* of Bourgogne, including a hierarchical structure.

*Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin

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