

MICHEL BUISSON

Meursault

It began in one of those innumerable discussions I have along these lines: "Where, oh where are the great white Burgundies - if any - like those great wines I have tasted from the '20s, '40s or '50s? And where is white Burgundy with the mineral expression, the fine balance, and the ageability that we know still exists in other white wine regions, whether it's the Rieslings of Boxler, the Sancerres of Cotat, or the Vouvrays of Foreau."

Actually, we were *in* Foreau's cellar - I and my Paris-based colleague Tom Calder - having this discussion near the end of our annual tasting. Whereupon, Foreau up and says: "I recently met just such a producer. Would you like to taste his wines?" This is the only foolish thing I have ever heard from Foreau's mouth. Seems he was so taken with the white Burgundies of this mystery man that he bought cases of wine for himself, and he said beyond that he could not remember when he'd last bought any white Burgundy.

So we taste exhibit A: Terrific richness and minerality and cut ... no cosmetics. Wow is this long! We guess it to be the most natural expression of Meursault Perrieres to pass our lips in a long time. "Wrong," says Foreau: "It's Charmes". (But much later we find out from Buisson that his Charmes abuts Perrieres - so there!)

"Let me show you an even better one," says Foreau. So then we taste '00 Goutte d'Or, without having any sense of what cru it might be, but sensing that this is the most exciting Côte d'Or wine we've "discovered" in a very long time.

All this is blind. Very blind, as it turns out. Foreau is not prepared to show us what's under the brown bags or who this mystery Meursault magician is. He's small and probably doesn't want to be disturbed, Foreau opines.



"When will you be back in Burgundy?" I'm prepared to answer: "Whenever you say, boss!" But actually, fortunately, I'll be there in ten days (on the back side of my annual Austrian sojourn). Foreau volunteers to call the mystery grower and see whether he can make an appointment for me. Until the last hours of the last day I still don't know the grower's identity, but finally, I pick up the address in a dead letter box ... oh, okay, Foreau calls me en route, and it is revealed.

Buisson is assisted by his daughter and brother-in-law. The latter is a high school phys-ed instructor ("so he has lots of time to devote to wine" jokes his wife). He hangs out with the journalistic and vinous movers and shakers of France, but doesn't try to influence dad's style, which is for very little new wood, no lees stirring, and an unhurried approach to vinification. I can't yet say what other details account for the little miracles that happen in the bottle here.

The daughter, Madame Charles, quite amazingly, worked as secretary for a French-American wine importer for many years. Here these wines were right under an importer's nose and never noticed.

When I arrived, a couple of Italians were filling their trunk. Turns out these guys are private customers of and very versant on all the best

Burgundy

Piemontese growers (i.e. the Barolo boys we know and love through Marc de Grazia). Seems Buisson is not exactly undiscovered in European circles.

We began our relationship with Buisson's 2000 vintage, plus a tiny bit of older wines. His prices are more than fair. Queue up now for the outstanding 2001s, which will arrive late in 2003!

Meursault

Meursault "Les Tesson's"

Meursault 1er cru Bouches-Chères

Meursault 1er cru Charmes

Meursault 1er cru Goutte-d'Or

Variety: Chardonnay

Total acreage: 15 acres

Vinificatory highlights: *Few new barrels, no lees stirring, late bottling ... what IS it with these wines? (Look for more details ...)*

Most of Buisson's vines are quite old, pre-clonal. Their "Les Tesson's" is clonally quite distinct and the wine possesses alluring minty, spicy, resinous notes that I have never before experienced in white Burgundy, but that are reminiscent of California's old Wente clone. It turns out, the bunches in Tesson are all hens-and-chicks, and that only certain vines convey the exotic, musky flavors. Well, that sounds uncannily like the Wente clonal family, of which Buisson's vines must be relatives now distant in space and time.

Buisson believes that the relatively obscure Bouches-Chères and only slightly better-known Goutte d'Or premier crus - which lie above Poruzot and well to the north of the other famous Meursault vineyards - are as fine as any Charmes. Once you taste, I suspect you'll concur!