

GERARD RAPHET

Morey-St.-Denis

Burgundy

Jean Raphet has until recently remained almost unknown, despite possessing an extraordinary collection of properties. Why? For one thing, he has a loyal private clientele who snap up whatever wines he bottles. For another, and more importantly, he has always sold most of his wine to negotiants, bottling only a little himself. That policy hasn't changed, but a colorful negotiant named Dominique Laurent, through his recent notoriety, has brought indirect, insiders' publicity to Raphet as a cherished source of pinot noir juice.

There is an enormous qualitative difference between the best and the least of Raphet's wines with, as Tony Hanson noted in his 1994 *Burgundy*, "... bottles sometimes just rich and supple, sometimes really brilliant." The seventy-five year-old vines in Clos de Beze and Lavaux-St.-Jacques yield something brilliant year after year. With Laurent purchasing whatever Raphet will allow him, there are now a mere 50-75 cases of each of these glorious wines vinified and bottled by Raphet himself.

The village Morey and Chambolle here are standouts, the former including a significant contingent of old vines and of *1er Cru* Les Millandes. Like the top crus, these wines have an excellent track record in the bottle, and I have regularly savored decade-old examples.

Jean's son Gerard has tended the vines here for the better part of a decade, and with the 2002 vintage, he officially assumes complete control and the domaine's given name changes accordingly. Gerard now must husband his energies, so vinification, sales and "marketing" will become more than ever a matter of fitting these great wines to agents who will make barrel-sized commitments. This policy will pay dividends for Vintner Select with two new wines (Bourgogne and Morey Les Millandes) and an entire precious barrel of Lavaux-St.-Jacques! Unchanged will be the style of the house (or is it more the *absence* of stylistic imposition?), the savor of old vines, and the class of the terroir.



Finally, new from 2002 is a (50 case) lot of Clos Vougeot Vieilles Vignes. The Raphets have extensive holdings in this famous grand cru, but the wine is seldom as exciting as many of their others due to a less than ideal location in this large, heterogeneous cru. Gerard Raphet decided to segregate only the oldest vines in the best portion of their holding, resulting in a wine that can give their celebrated Chambertin Clos de Beze a run for its money.

"The top crus are remarkable for their finesse, aromatic purity, and undeflected expression of terroir. We heartily recommend, in addition to the Grand Crus, the simple village Morey-St.-Denis in which the winemaker incorporates a significant portion of *premier cru*, so that its equilibrium and elegance are exceptional."

- Bettane & Desseauve,
Le Classement de 1998

Bourgogne
Chambolle Musigny
Morey-St.-Denis
Morey-St.-Denis 1^{er} Cru
Les Millandes
Gevrey Chambertin 1^{er} Cru
Lavaux-St.-Jacques
Clos Vougeot
Chambertin Clos de Beze

Variety: *Pinot Noir*

Total acreage: 25 acres including 2 acres in Chambolle, over an acre in village Morey-St.-Denis, but only around a half acre of Lavaux-St.-Jacques and of Clos de Beze. There are also village Gevrey, Charmes Chambertin, and major acreage in Clos Vougeot.

Average production: Only a few hundred cases are estate-bottled for cellar door sales and a few importers such as ourselves.

Highlights: Village Chambolle vines are in the Bussiere vineyard, abutting Morey. Vines in Lavaux-St.-Jacques and Clos de Beze planted in the '20s. Raphet has never filtered a wine, uses little new oak except or his Clos de Beze (which is done 100% in new barrels, but experienced tasters would be hard-pressed to guess that, so powerful is the wine itself!) Vinification is very traditional, including old-fashioned, (literally foot stomped in) pigeage.

"Jean Raphet is known in France as being one of the very best sources for Chambertin Clos de Beze."

Pierre Rovani, The Wine Advocate
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