

## Albert Bichot: an important Bourgogne negociant and land-owner, currently making some excellent wines.

By *Jamie Goode*



Most people think of Albert Bichot as a negociant, but this isn't doing the full justice. While negociant activity is an important part of its business, accounting for 80% of its volume, it's also an important vineyard owner, with 100 hectares of vines across six separate estates. And the negociant activity has changed of late: they mostly buy grapes, and just a little must, and no longer buy bulk wine.

Their largest holdings are in Chablis, where they own Long-Depaquit, including 10 hectares of Chablis Grand Cru. Their La Moutonne wine is from a vineyard spanning two of the Grand Crus: it is 95% Vaudesir and 5% Preuses, and it could be its own Grand Cru with a 2.35 ha of vines.

I visited with Matthieu Mangenot, technical director (pictured above), who oversees the wines from vineyard to bottle. Founded in 1831, this is one of the few wineries in Bourgogne still in the hands of its founding family. The family is quite involved in the management, he says.

In 2000 they began farming organically, and then began the process of conversion in 2012. In 2014 they became certified for most of their vineyards, although Long-Depaquit is still in conversion – it's harder to farm organically in Chablis.

Another interest here is Aligoté, which I'm very keen on. 'We do some Aligoté on a large scale and vinify a lot,' says Matthieu. Their classic Aligoté is made in stainless steel, and is a strong seller in Canada especially in Quebec. 'But we also have single vineyard Aligoté cuvées with Domaine Adélie,' he says. Does Aligoté have a future? 'I'm sure it has,' he says. 'It was challenging for Aligoté to ripen in the past, but we see vintage after vintage that it has a future in terms of aromatics, structure and ability to age. It was not well considered and not treated as well as it should have been in the past. It is fun to see how it can adapt and how it can age, especially if you treat it like Chardonnay and work the lees. It has this green aspect that I really like.'

He adds, 'We are still exploring how Aligoté can behave with some more lees contact. We want to keep the original aromatics, but also to have a nice wide mouthfeel with some structure. We are still working with this.'

### THE WINES

#### **Bourgogne Côte d'Or Pinot Noir Secret de Famille 2021**

Hand harvest, sorted, destemmed, with a long maceration (cold soak 6-8 days), pressed and aged 100% in oak. Beautifully aromatic with fresh red cherries and plums, showing raspberry and even a hint of beetroot. Lovely flesh here with pure fruit showing good acidity and lovely precision. Pure, with good weight and a bit of structure. So much pleasure here, with freshness and nice balance. **94/100**

#### **Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru Les Sorbets 2020**

30% whole bunch. This vineyard is just below Clos du Tart. Powerful, dense and structured with sweet ripe cherry and raspberry, as well as a slight beetroot edge. Bold and full with nice intensity. Has some sour cherry, a gravelly spiciness, and a slight bitter edge on the finish. This is a big wine with lots of impact. Fleshy and intense, it will be interesting to see how this develops. Rich and enticing, with a lovely silky texture alongside the tannic structure. **94/100**

#### **Château-Gris Nuits Saint Georges 1er Cru Monopole 2020**

Destemmed. Les Crots is the lieu dit, but they can call this terraced monopole Château Gris. Lots of limestone here: rocky soils. Ripe and supple with sweet, grainy, textured cherry and raspberry fruit, supported by good structure. Fleshy and delicious with nice sweet cherry, some sour cherry and a nice supple fruity quality, showing a lovely acid line. Notes of iodine, minerals and blood. So fresh and expressive, despite the weight of fruit. **96/100**

#### **Albert Bichot Domaine du Pavillon Pommard Clos des Ursulines Monopole 2020**

30% whole bunch. 3.5 hectare clos, village level, on east side of Pommard. Lovely purity here with sweet cherries and plums as well as nice grainy, grippy structure. There's a core of sweet fruit with lovely purity and good density. Grippy and fine, with lovely balance and purity. Such an expressive wine with flesh and fruit, delivering pleasure but also good structure. **95/100**



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### **Domaine Adélie Bourgogne Aligoté Champ Renard 2022**

Champ Renard is just outside Mercurey. Small plot with 5000-6000 bottle production each year. In tank and also 350 litre barrels, with some lees work. Crystalline, linear and pure with lovely acidity. There's a nice depth to the pear and citrus fruit with mineral notes and a slight salinity. Juicy and fine, with some structure and depth, showing great precision and focus. Lovely purity here. **93/100**

### **Domaine Adélie Bourgogne Aligoté Champ Renard 2021**

Appealing nose with some apricot and peach richness as well as bright citrus, showing lovely open, fresh fruit. There's an exotic character to the fruit, with nice freshness. Such nice presence here, with quite a bit of treble in the mix. **92/100**

### **Domaine Adélie Bourgogne Aligoté Champ Renard 2020**

Nice depth and focus here with sweet pear and citrus, showing nice brightness and focus with some pear, spice and green apple. There's a touch of nuttiness and a nice structural character. Some cabbage notes in the background, finishing with some pith and herbs. **91/100**

### **Domaine Long-Depaquit Chablis 1er Cru Les Vaillons 2022**

Mainly Pinots, then Lys and Beugnons. 10% of the wine is fermented in used oak. Hot vintage but lovely precision and minerality under the rich pear and apple fruit. There's some lime here, and a touch of mandarin, but also a core of good acidity. Nice concentration of flavour here. Finishes saline with some lemon zest. A bold expression of Vaillons. **93/100**

### **Bourgogne Côte d'Or Chardonnay Secret de Famille 2021**

The secret is plots that are located next to famous names, but they are in the regional appellation, making interesting wines at low prices. Barrel fermented. Stony, fresh and precise with lovely bright pear and citrus fruit with some subtle green hints, and good purity. Has a slightly stony chalky mineral streak. Finishes fresh and linear. Very appealing. **92/100**

### **Santenay Blanc 2021**

At the far end of the Côtes de Beaune, just past Chassagne. Santenay makes nice whites that are still affordable, and also some nice reds too. Barrel fermented with 20% new oak with ageing over two winters. Lovely fine toast and spice here integrated nicely with the dense, linear citrus and pear fruit. There's a good acid spine to this wine which has flesh, richness and depth, but also intensity. Fine. **93/100**

*Jamie Goode is a London-based wine writer, lecturer, wine judge and book author. With a PhD in plant biology, he worked as a science editor, before starting wineanorak.com, one of the world's most popular wine websites.*