

## **Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter Jan 24, 2008**

### **One of the world's finest desert wines from the Loire**

Today something really special: Wine insiders and geeks have for many years enjoyed the Chenin Blanc wines of the Loire Valley in France. Very limited distribution of these wines outside Europe means that these wines are often overlooked by the wine loving public in the US. This, however, is starting to change, as over the past few years some of these wines have been receiving fantastic scores from the leading wine critics. Some more adventurous chefs have added these wines to better restaurant wine lists. As more wine lovers have discovered these limited wines, they are starting to become even harder to obtain. The recent great vintage of 2005 has received great accolades but with increased demand, high scores, and poor currency exchange rates, prices have jumped 35-40%, sometimes even more...

At the very top of the quality scale, and most limited in quantity, are the unique dessert wines of the Loire. They are also amongst some of the best aging white wines on the planet -unquestionably improving by gaining complexities and secondary flavors. There are only a handful of producers whose wines are recognized as the finest : Huet, Foreau, Joly, Delesvaux and Baumard.

### **\$\$\$ Special wine deals \$\$\$**

#### **Collector's corner**

### **Baumard Quarts De Chaume 2003 \$52**

We managed to get our hands on a small stash of Baumard's very best: Quarts de Chaume from the excellent 2003 vintage. This parcel has been stored under ideal conditions since release. Since this was one of the warmest vintages on record, the 2003 QdC is even more approachable in its youth. This makes the 2003 more versatile than other "classic" vintages of this vine (which may require longer cellar time to show their best). As with many other wines, this parcel was purchased at a lower cost, with stronger currency. Wine lovers are now snapping up vintages which, in addition to the benefit of some bottle age, represent unbeatable values. These wines are becoming scarcer every day. With today's wine offered at well below the original release price, I urge you to stock up now while you have the chance.

Wine Spectator's review from Sep 30, 2005 :*Special Designation; Highly Recommended, score: 96 points ! Release price \$69 - This has a very powerful, concentrated core of almond, white peach, honeysuckle, mineral and candied lemon peel, but all is meshed perfectly together on a creamy, porcelain texture and glides effortlessly through the finish. Extremely long and finely detailed. A worthy rival to the slightly purer '02. Best from 2007 through 2030. 1,250 cases made. – JM*

For those of you who may enjoy more information on this wine and producer I have attached the following article from the *WINE SPECTATOR MAGAZINE* written by Jame Molesworth in the November 15,2004 issue.

## Domaine des Baumard A benchmark for Chenin Blanc

Since its founding in 1953 by Jean Baumard, Domaine des Baumard has been one of the Loire Valley's best producers of Chenin Blanc, headlined by its flagship Quarts de Chaume, one of the world's great sweet white wines.

Baumard's Quarts de Chaume has rated 90 points or better on Wine Spectator's 100-point scale for eight consecutive vintages. A non-blind vertical tasting of 18 vintages back to 1959 testified to the wine's quality and traced its evolution.

With just fewer than 100 acres of vineyard, the Quarts de Chaume appellation has only a handful of owners, and is known for producing rich, opulent dessert wines.

Baumard, now 73, declassified three of his first five vintages. Yet he set a baseline for quality that resulted in his becoming a recognized leader in the region. Over the years, he acquired additional vineyards and built the domaine up to its present-day total of 86 acres, including slightly more than 14 in Quarts de Chaume.

Under his stewardship, the domaine's Quarts de Chaume hit impressive heights in the great vintages for the region, such as '59 and '67. Relying on bracing acidity and minerality rather than opulent fruit or botrytis, the wines showed a flavor profile that changed with the vintage characteristics—dry and nervy, with chamomile and almond notes in leaner years; plumper, with fig and ginger notes in more powerful vintages.

Over time, however, the domaine began to exhibit a more consistent style. While the older vintages in the tasting were still alive and complex, they were far more variable in profile. In contrast, the more recent vintages—1990 through 2001—showed a strong, cohesive flavor profile while showcasing an extra dimension of fruit and power.

The change in style corresponds with a change at the domaine. As Jean eased into retirement in the early 1990s, his son, Florent, took charge. Soft-spoken and humble, Florent, 43, speaks with the tact of a seasoned politician. "I am only trying to continue what my father did," he says. "Not revolutionize it." The wines made under Florent's tenure continue to show terroir, while displaying increased purity and depth.

"It's not trendy to say this—especially here, where the more peasant look you have the better the wine must be—but modernization is good for terroir," says the younger Baumard. "It's the difference between cooking dinner for 20 guests in a small kitchen versus a larger one. The physical things become easier."

Baumard uses the kitchen analogy to explain the lone major change he has instituted during his tenure. Today, Baumard still harvests the grapes in multiple passes (called tris) through the vineyards, but he now presses the fruit from each tri several times. These separate runoffs provide different elements from which he makes a final blend. With some pressings having more sugar than others, or more tannin or acidity, Baumard draws on numerous small lots of juice, in contrast to the single pressings and large lots of juice his father worked with.

However, Florent is quick to point out that much at the domaine remains the same as it was with his father at the helm, including when the grapes are picked.

"We try to pick mature grapes, not just concentrated ones," says Florent, who feels that an overreliance on botrytis results in heavy-handed wines, of which he is not a fan. As with other things, Florent has gotten his palate from his father.

Today, Baumard's Quarts de Chaume is an unabashedly modern wine, yet despite this shift it retains the vivacity and balance the appellation is known for. By fine-tuning rather than overhauling, Florent has made his wines more complete while retaining their distinctive terroir. Baumard's Chenin Blancs are benchmarks from a grape and an appellation that deserve more attention from those who love sweet white wines.

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### **Events:**

#### **The Colorado Business Hall of Fame**

February 7, 2008 at the Denver Marriott City Center : Jointly produced by the Denver metro Chamber of Commerce and Junior Achievement, this event recognizes outstanding Colorado business and civic leaders from past and present, publicizes the contributions of business leaders to our community and promotes the importance and value of the free enterprise system. This black-tie dinner, is one of Denver's premier business events. The Colorado Business Hall of Fame provides an excellent opportunity for networking, client entertainment and employee appreciation. And since *WINEPAIRINGS* is once again supplying the wines, you know this event will rock. For additional information :

<http://www.jacolorado.org/content/view/78/90/>

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