

# Wines of France

# Burgundy



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# Introduction

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While all of France's wine regions are special, Burgundy is in a class by itself. The wines are sublime, distinctive and evocative of place. However, as good as the wines are, developing an understanding the region's complex wine landscape – derived from the extreme fragmentation of its classified vineyard area into small geographic plots – can be quite a task. Explaining this landscape and what makes the wines from each area unique is what this guidebook was designed to do.

This Approach Guide focuses on the five principal areas of Burgundy: Côte d'Or, Côte Chalonnaise, Mâconnais, Beaujolais and Yonne.

## What's in this guidebook

- **Grape varieties.** We describe Burgundy's primary red and white grape varieties and where they reach their highest expressions.
- **Vintage ratings.** We offer a straightforward vintage ratings table, which affords high-level insight into the best and most challenging years for wine production in Burgundy.
- **Appellation profiles.** We provide detailed profiles of each of Burgundy's appellations. For each appellation, this guide describes the prevailing *terroir*, the types of wine produced and what makes them distinctive.
- **Recommendations.** We mark our favorite appellations with asterisks (\*) — our selections have a record for providing quality, consistency and good values.
- **Information the way you like it.** As with all of our guides, this book is optimized for intuitive, quick navigation; information is organized into bullet points to make absorption easy; and links are provided to the best online resources.

This guidebook's approach is based on that of our wine app for the iPhone and iPad ([wine.approachguides.com](http://wine.approachguides.com)) and is unique: rather than tell you what specific bottle of wine to order by providing individual bottle reviews, it gives you the information you require to make informed wine choices on any list.

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We hope you enjoy what we believe is a totally unique guide to the wines of Burgundy.

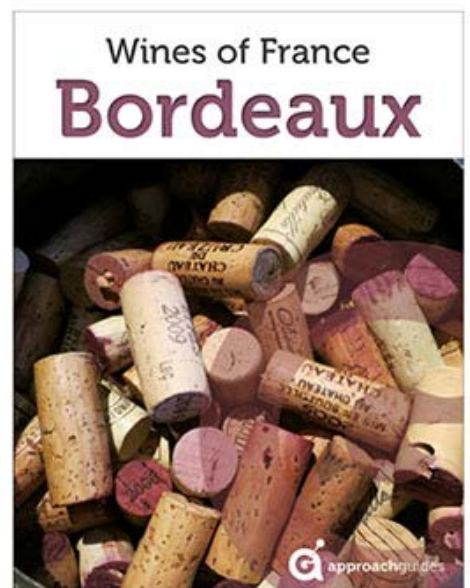
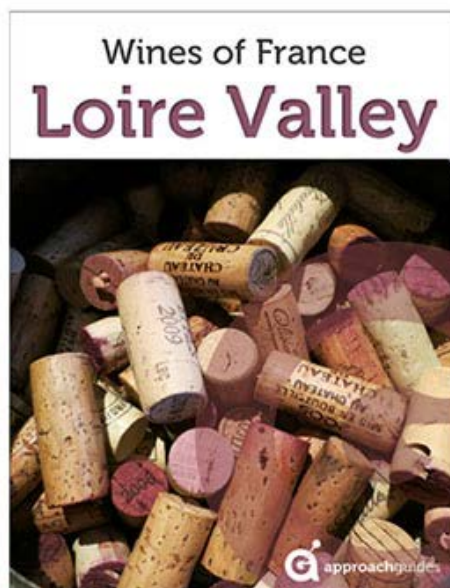
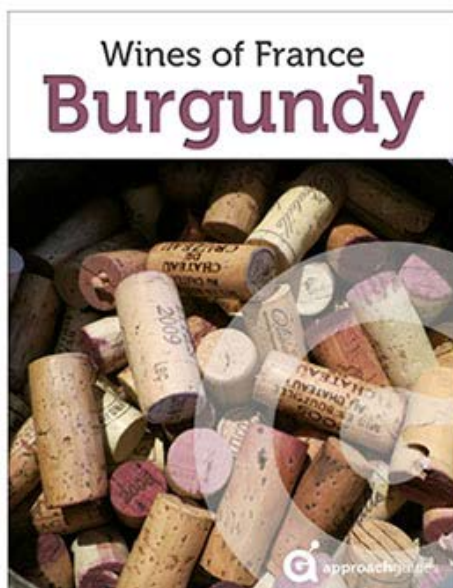




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# Wines of France: Burgundy

**Version 1.2**

by [David Raezer](#) and [Jennifer Raezer](#)

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# Contents

Introduction

Overview

Burgundy Grape Varieties

A Burgundy Wine Label

Vintages

Burgundy's Subzones

CÔTE D'OR

Côte de Nuits

Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Nuits \*

Chambolle-Musigny \*

Côte de Nuits-Villages

Fixin \*

Gevrey-Chambertin \*

Marsannay

Morey-St-Denis \*

Nuits-St-Georges

Vosne-Romanée \*

Vougeot \*

Côte de Beaune

Aloxe-Corton

Auxey-Duresses \*

Beaune \*

Blagny \*

Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Beaune \*

Chassagne-Montrachet \*

Chorey-lès-Beaune \*

Côte de Beaune-Villages

Ladoix-Serrigny

Maranges

Meursault \*

Monthélie \*

Pernand-Vergelesses \*

Pommard

Puligny-Montrachet \*

Santenay \*

Savigny-lès-Beaune \*

Saint-Aubin \*

Saint-Romain \*

Volnay \*

## CÔTE CHALONNAISE

Bourgogne Passe-Tout-Grains

Bouzeron

Crémant de Bourgogne

Givry \*

Mercurey

Montagny

Rully \*

## MÂCONNAIS

Mâcon

Pouilly-Fuissé

Saint-Véran \*

## BEAUJOLAIS

Beaujolais

Beaujolais Blanc

[Beaujolais-Villages](#)

[Brouilly](#)

[Chénas](#)

[Chiroubles \\*](#)

[Côte de Brouilly](#)

[Fleurie](#)

[Juliéna](#)

[Morgon \\*](#)

[Moulin-à-Vent \\*](#)

[Régnié](#)

[St-Amour](#)

[THE YONNE](#)

[Chablis](#)

[Beyond Chablis](#)

[The Wines of Bordeaux and the Loire](#)

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# Burgundy Grape Varieties

## Chardonnay

An thin-skinned, early-ripening Burgundy grape (with a Mediterranean past), **chardonnay is almost an international brand, or byword, for fine white wine**. It prefers soils with more limestone and less clay. Further, the timing of harvesting is critical for Chardonnay, as it quickly passes from ripe to over-ripe, and in the process, loses the requisite acidity for a superior wine. In the cellar, it is a winemaker's delight: it responds well to techniques such as lees stirring and oak-aging.

Overall, wines based on chardonnay can be quite alcoholic and fairly low in acidity, revealing delicate aromas of tropical fruits, melon, peaches, vanilla and hazelnuts. They are often oak-aged and can improve with age in the bottle.

- Chardonnay achieves the **apex of its expression in the limestone-heavy soils of Burgundy's Côte d'Or, especially the Côte de Beaune**, in the Grands and Premiers Crus vineyards of Puligny-Montrachet, Chassagne-Montrachet and Meursault. These wines, typically vinified in wood, offer bright, opulent peachy fruit coupled with creamy-nutty-buttery notes.
- **Chardonnay in another exemplary zone of Burgundy, Chablis, is unique**. It has a firm minerality, what the French call gunflint, or *pierre à fusil*, and a refreshing acidity, and unlike white Burgundy from the Côte d'Or, it does not need aging in oak to bring out the best in a wine. In fact Chablis has an amazing ability to make you believe that it has been aged in oak, when it has not been near a stave of wood. This is part of its charm.
- Aside from the Côte d'Or and Chablis, there are very good wines made throughout Burgundy. The **Mâconnais**, in particular, is worth exploring for great values.

## Gamay

Of the 35,000 hectares of gamay planted throughout the world, 22,000 hectares are in Burgundy's Beaujolais region, spread over 38 villages. The gamay red grape — formally known as gamay noir à jus blanc — dominates Beaujolais, making up 99% of total production. It produces its **best results on the granite-based, silty-sandy soils of the northern Haut Beaujolais**; that said, it also yields good results on the limestone and clay soils of the southern Bas Beaujolais and the Mâconnais region to its north.

The thin-skinned, early-ripening gamay is capable of **great fruitiness and high acidity**; when treated properly, it can generate wines that resemble those based on pinot noir in many respects. Flavor profiles typically lean toward the red fruit (cherries, strawberries and raspberries) side of the spectrum; the best wines will incorporate more dark fruit elements and deliver notes of earth, game, herbs and black tea. Often made using **carbonic maceration** that favors bright fruit and low tannins (for more on this fermentation process, see the Beaujolais region profile), gamay-based wines are typically **made for immediate consumption**; however, in certain select Cru Beaujolais villages (especially the Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent AOCs), they can age for three to five years or

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# A Burgundy Wine Label

## A Wine Label Explained

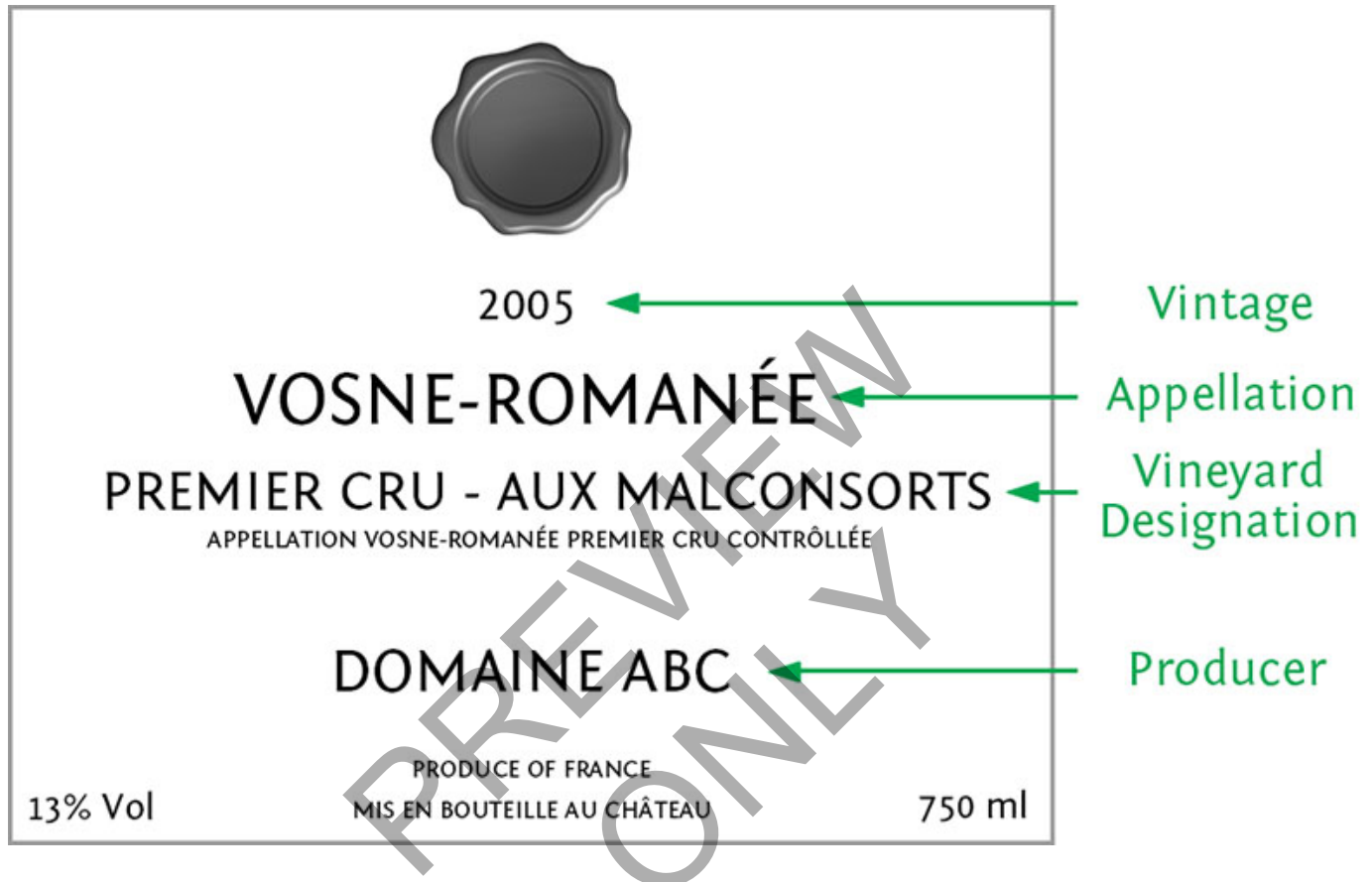


Fig. 1. A Burgundy wine label.

A Burgundy wine label provides critical information for understanding what to expect before you open the bottle. Most important, labels reveal the wine's vintage, producer, appellation and vineyard designation (green highlights in Fig. 1). The appellation and vineyard designation are a bit more complicated and require some explanation.

## Appellation

Even if you know nothing about a wine's producer, the appellation gives you the first big clue as to what's in the bottle. Put simply, an appellation **identifies the specific geographic location** in which the grapes for a wine were grown; for reference, Burgundy's appellations are marked on the map in the next section. Knowing the appellation in which a wine was produced affords you some critical information.

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## Vintages

We provide a simple 1-5 rating for vintages in all five primary regions, 5 being the best and 1 being the worst. These ratings are general indications of the relative strength of each vintage and meant to provide a basic framework for appreciating which vintages were more conducive to high quality wine production.

	Côte d'Or, Chalonaise, Mâconnais	Beaujolais	Yonne
	Red Wines	White Wines	
2011	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
2010	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
2009	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
2008	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
2007	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
2006	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
2005	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
2004	★★★	★★★★	★★★
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2002	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
2001	★★★★	★★★★	★★
2000	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★☆☆
1999	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
1998	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
1997	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
1996	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
1995	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
1994	★★	★★★★	★★
1993	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
1992	★★★	★★★★	★★★
1991	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
1990	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★



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Burgundy's Côte d'Or, or Golden Slope, is home to **the supreme expressions of pinot noir and chardonnay**. The region's wines are celebrated for their subtlety, sophistication and reflection of *terroir*.

The Côte d'Or consists of two distinct parts:

- **Côte de Nuits.** The Côte de Nuits is dominated by **pinot noir-based reds**. As compared to the Côte de Beaune, they are slightly bigger, more tannic and oriented toward flavors that favor the black fruit side of the spectrum and earthy nuances. The vineyards sit on a steep slope; the slope runs in a north-south alignment, with vineyards oriented toward the east.
- **Côte de Beaune.** In the Côte de Beaune, the slope becomes slightly gentler and runs in a northeast-to-southwest alignment, with vineyards oriented toward the southeast. Whereas the Côte de Nuits is focused on reds, the Côte de Beaune produces **both reds and whites, based on pinot noir and chardonnay, respectively**. As compared to those of the Côte de Nuits, the reds are slightly softer and lean toward the red fruit side of the flavor spectrum; the whites are world-class wines, the pinnacle of chardonnay.

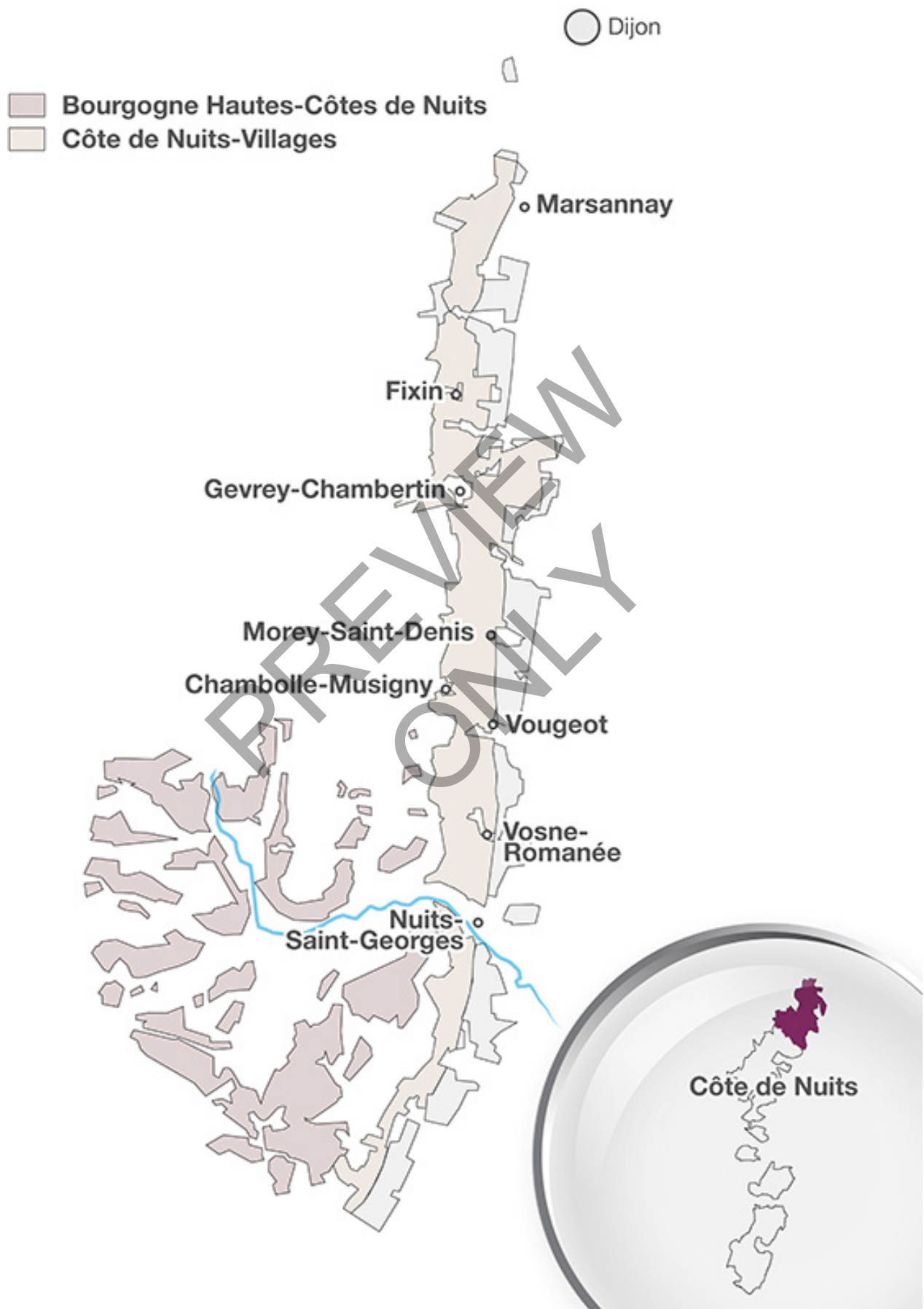
### A strategy for finding good wines and good values

To help our readers most efficiently identify the highest quality wines, we have placed asterisks (\*) in the description for each communal appellation next to those Grands Crus, Premiers Crus and lieux-dits (named vineyards) that are delivering the most consistently high quality offerings.

Further, the world-class wines of Burgundy – from appellations such as Chambolle-Musigny, Gevrey-Chambertin, Vosne-Romanée, Vougeot, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet – can be quite expensive, sometimes prohibitively so. As a result, while we provide detailed profiles of all appellations, **we draw particular attention to those that are delivering some of the best values**. In our opinion, these value-oriented communal appellations include:

- **Red Burgundy:** Auxey-Duresses, Beaune, Blagny, Chorey-lès-Beaune, Fixin, Givry (Côte Chalonnaise), Maranges, Marsannay, Mercurey (Côte Chalonnaise), Monthélie, Pernand-Vergelesses, Saint-Aubin, Savigny-lès-Beaune and Santenay.
- **White Burgundy:** Auxey-Duresses, Montagny (Côte Chalonnaise), Rully (Côte Chalonnaise), Saint-Aubin and Saint-Véran (Mâconnais).

# Côte de Nuits



## Vosne-Romanée \*

Vosne-Romanée sits midway down the Côte de Nuits, just south of Vougeot. Soils consist of a pebbly mixture of chalk, iron-rich clay and sand. There is more clay down slope, yielding more powerful wines; and less clay up slope, yielding wines with more finesse.

### \* Reds

Red wines are based exclusively on **pinot noir**.

The steep slopes of Vosne-Romanée are **home to Burgundy's top Grands Crus vineyards; red Burgundy reaches no greater heights**. These exclusively pinot noir-based wines are rich and austere; they are **astoundingly complex and extracted**. The palate goes well beyond red and black fruits, with discernible notes of truffles, chocolate and earth; there is trademark spiciness. **The only drawback: astronomical prices.**

Despite the exceptionally high quality of the Grands and Premiers Crus wines, however, **the Village level wines are generally inconsistent**; we advise caution when selecting wines at this level.

To help further with wine selection, we have placed **asterisks** by those crus that are producing the most consistently high quality wines.

### Grands Crus vineyards

- La Grand Rue: 2 ha.
- \*Richebourg: 9 ha. The richest and most concentrated of the Grands Crus wines.
- La Romanée: 1 ha. Lean toward the richer style of Richebourg.
- \*Romanée-Conti: 2 ha. Seen by many as being the pinnacle of the Côte de Nuits.
- \*Romanée-St-Vivant: 9 ha. A lighter style for the Grand Crus, with a bit more red currant spice quality.
- \*La Tache: 6 ha. Often rivals Romanée-Conti; they are slightly bigger, deeper, more intense wines than those of the marginally more delicate and aromatic Romanée-Conti.
- Echezeaux (Flagey-Echexaux): 32 ha.
- Grands-Echezeaux (Flagey-Echexaux): 9 ha. Very good reputation. Especially big wines, probably the most powerful of the Grands Crus.

### Premiers Crus vineyards

Audessus des Malconsorts, \*Les Beaux Monts, \*Aux Brulees, \*Les Chaumes, \*Le Clos de Reas (monopole), La Croix Rameau, \*Cros Parantoux, Les Gaudichots, \*Aux Malconsorts, En Orveaux, Les Petits Monts, Aux Reignots, Les Rouges and \*Les Suchots.

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## Auxey-Duresses \*

The vineyards of Auxey-Duresses (pronounced “Aussey”) are located in the Côte de Beaune, south of the city of Beaune, wedged between Monthélie and the white wine superstar Meursault; located slightly to the west of its neighbors, the appellation borders on the cooler climate Hautes-Cotes de Beaune (this slightly cooler climate affords the wines their greater delicacy). Soils consist of two types: stony limestone and clay on Montagne du Bourdon (best for red wines); and thinner soils that are decidedly more limestone rich on Mont Melian (best for white wines).

### \* Reds

Red wines, making up two-thirds of production, are based on **pinot noir**.

Like those of Monthélie to its north, **the wines of Auxey-Duresses offer hints of the delicacy and high aromatics characteristic of those of its famous neighbor to the north, Volnay**, although they tend to lack their concentration, complexity and intensity. Although some of the Premiers Crus can develop bigger profiles, wines are typically medium-bodied with red fruit-biased flavor profiles. To take the comparison further: while the Premiers Crus of Auxey-Duresses often do not consistently rival those of neighboring Monthélie (they can lack the polish), its basic Village wines often surpass those of its neighbor; accordingly, **this is an appellation in which to seek out its basic Village wines (branded simply as “Auxey-Duresses”) for particularly compelling values**. We advocate such a Village strategy in the best vintages.

To help further with wine selection, we have placed asterisks by those crus that are producing the most consistently high quality wines.

### Premiers Crus vineyards

Bas de Duresses, Les Breterins, \*La Chapelle, Climat du Val, \*Clos du Val, \*Les Duresses, Les Ecusseaux, Les Grands-Champs and Reugny.

### \* Whites

**Auxey-Duresses marks the northernmost portion of the Côte d’Or’s white wine country**, sitting on the northern edge of the same slope that comprises the highly regarded Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet appellations. White wines based on **chardonnay** account for approximately one-third of the appellation’s total production.

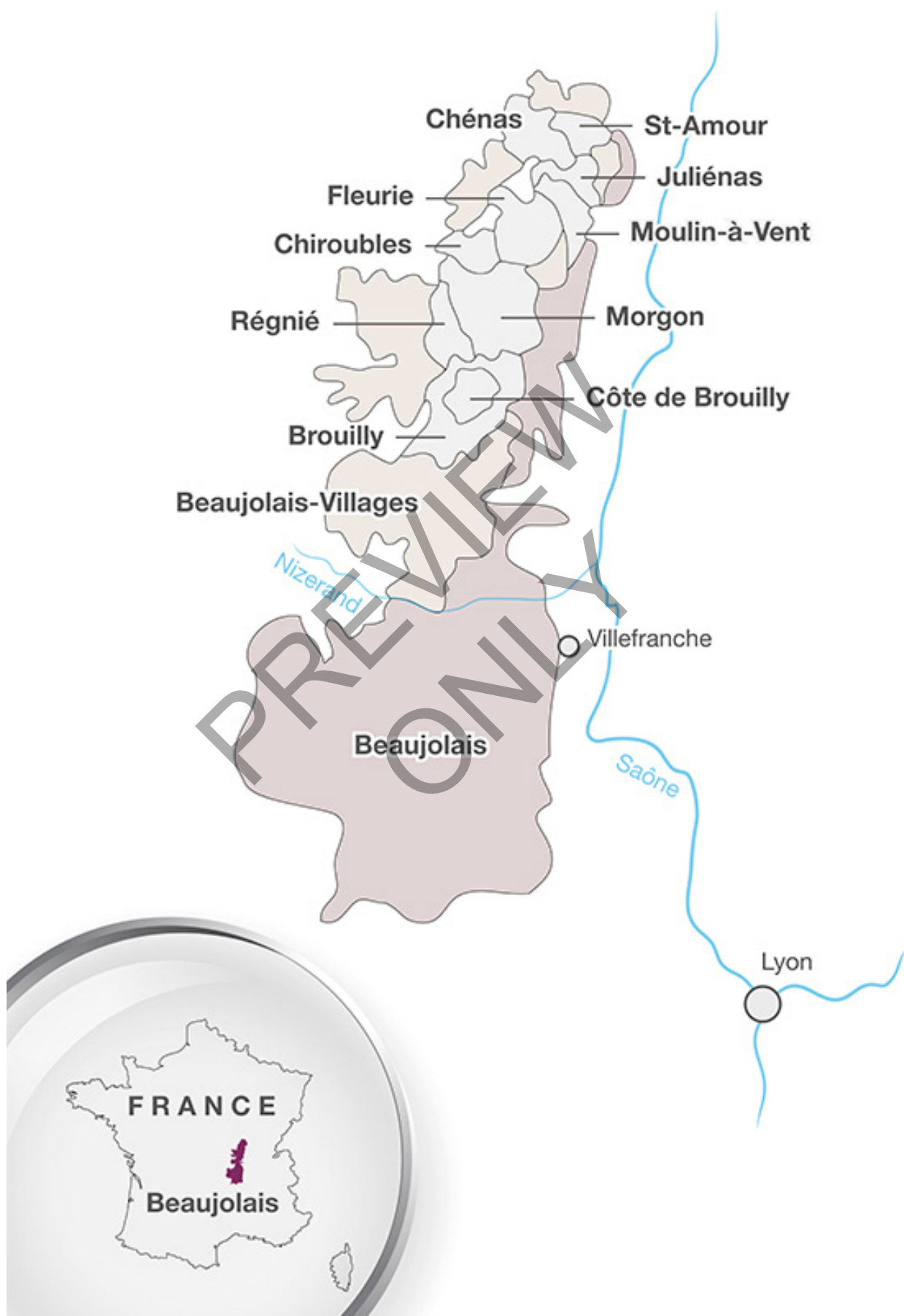
Auxey whites **can achieve the nutty, creamy character of a Meursault**, however, they tend to have **slightly more acidity**, as grapes sometimes struggle to reach optimal ripeness. These wines should be drunk young. That said, **these are great white values and should be sought out**.

While Auxey-Duresses has Premiers Crus for red wines, there are none for white wines.

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# BEAUJOLAIS



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Beaujolais, the largest and southernmost region in Burgundy, lies roughly midway between Burgundy's famed Côte d'Or and the Northern Rhône Valley.

## Region and Soils

Beaujolais can be divided into two distinct zones, northern and southern (the Nizerand River, just north of the regional capital of Villefranche, is the dividing point):

- **Northern (Haut) Beaujolais.** Vineyards in this zone sit on the slopes of the Monts du Beaujolais; soils are acidic and granite based. This is the home of the region's best wines, including those of Cru Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages.
- **Southern (Bas) Beaujolais.** The soil of this flatter (but still hilly) area consists of clay and limestone.

## The Gamay Red Grape Variety

Vineyards are dominated by the red gamay grape variety (more formally known as gamay noir à jus blanc), which makes up a whopping 99% of total production; this leaves a mere one percent for the region's chardonnay-based whites.

## Carbonic Maceration

Instead of simply yeast-fermenting the juice of crushed grapes, as is standard practice in most of the winemaking world, Beaujolais pursues a different fermentation option: carbonic maceration (aka whole berry fermentation). In carbonic maceration, **whole, unpressed grapes** (and sometimes their stems) are placed in carbon dioxide-filled tanks and anaerobic fermentation occurs on the sugar due to enzymes present naturally in the grapes. At the same time, a conventional, yeast-based fermentation occurs on a small amount of free run juice (10-30% of tank volume) that has been released by compression of the grapes under their own weight.

Carbonic maceration produces light-bodied, brightly colored, fruity red wines for early consumption (due to the very low tannins). While nearly all winemakers in Beaujolais employ carbonic maceration, those from the ten crus (discussed below) typically only use it on small portion of their grapes, relying primarily on conventional, yeast-based fermentation; this affords their wines increased concentration of flavor and greater aging potential.

Thermovinification – a process by which grape must is heated to near boiling – is another process used in Beaujolais to intensify the color of the wines.

## General Wine Profile

For the most part, Beaujolais wines are **light to medium bodied, high in acidity, low in tannins and deliver big, up-front red fruit flavors**. They have a high capacity for soil and site

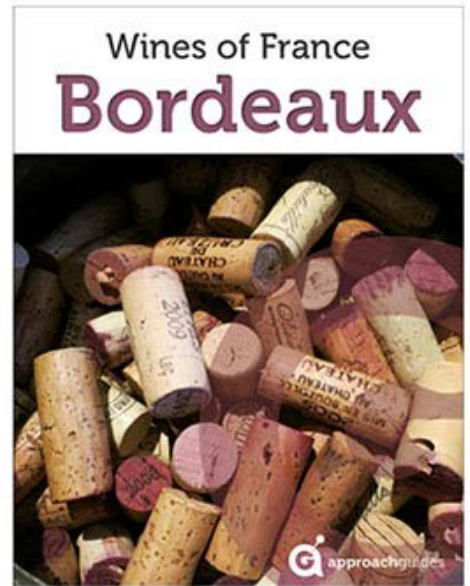
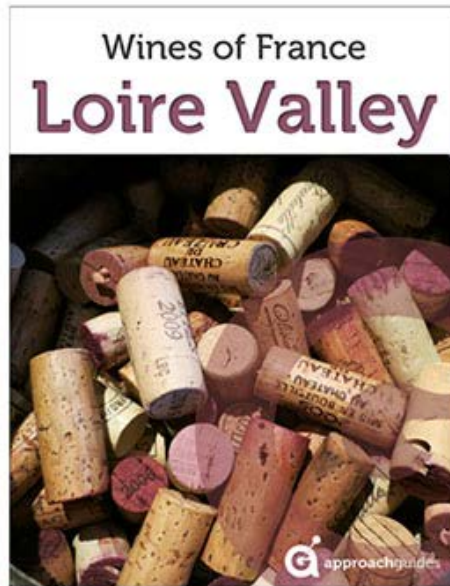
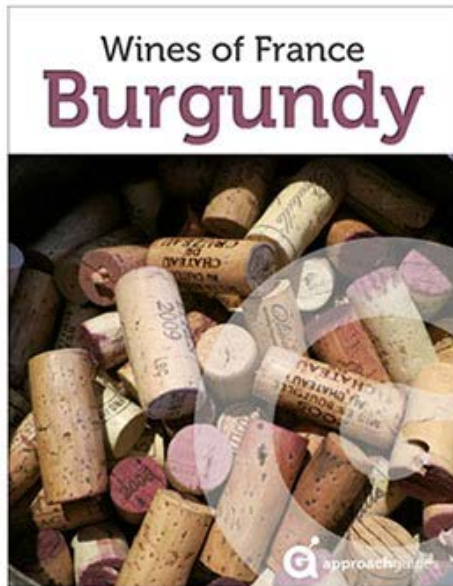


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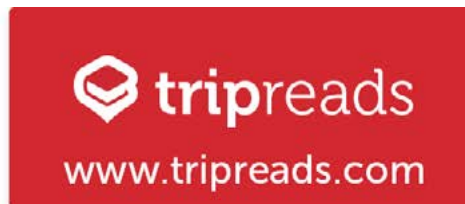
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Here are just a few of our France recommendations ([see the complete list](#)):

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- **"France's Troubled Romance with Beef"** Is French gourmet culture becoming less French? *By Tanya Basu.*
- **My First French Book** Just for kids! A bilingual introduction to words, numbers, shapes and colors. *By Mandy Stanley.*

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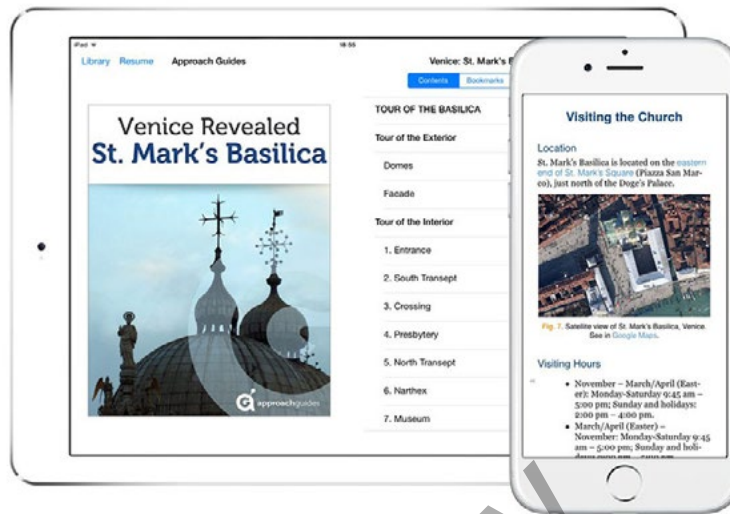
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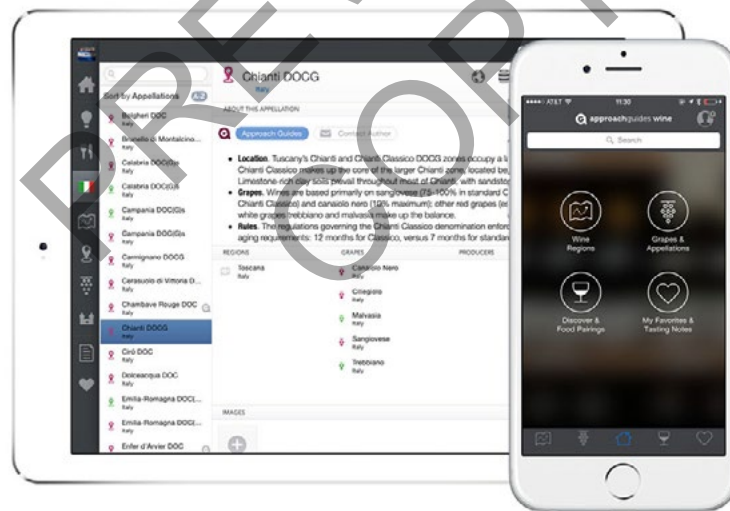
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