

ROBERSON WINE PRESENTS  
THE WINES OF  
VOLNAY

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## THE VILLAGE

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Travelling south from Beaune on the RN 74, it doesn't take long before you pass Pommard and the picturesque village of Volnay hoves in to view, with the church steeple rising above a collection of stone houses and some of the most hallowed Pinot Noir vineyards in the world. The vines stretch across 207 hectares, of which a remarkable 54% is classified as 1er Cru and an unfortunate 0% is classified as Grand Cru - a surprising anomaly when you consider the rich and prestigious history of the village's wines and vineyards.

The village's name is a derivative of 'Volen', a Celtic god of water that was worshipped by the Gauls. Over time the name became Vollenay, before finally changing to Volnay after the middle ages. Whatever it happened to be called at the time, Volnay was a wine with an exalted reputation that was favoured by the Dukes of Burgundy, King Louis XII (who owned land in a number of 1er cru vineyards) and Louis XIV (who's physician prescribed it to cure all manner of the King's ills). This created a cult following for Volnay and by the time of the (somewhat controversial) 1860 classification of Burgundy's vineyards, Volnay was looked upon very favourably - a situation that, to an extent, was further entrenched following the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée laws that gave Volnay more 1er Cru land than any other commune (with the exception of Beaune). What Volnay didn't get was a Grand Cru, despite Dr Lavalley classifying Santenots-du-Milieu, Champans and Caillerets (among others) as 'tête de cuvée' (his version of Grand Cru) in his 1855 hierarchy - a classification that formed the basis of the AOC laws.

Out of the arguments that were caused by the 1860 and 1919 classifications of vineyards came a movement of vineyard owners (led by Volnay's Marquis d'Angerville) that were committed to very strictly demarcation of *climats* or specific vineyards sites. This was in opposition to the far more lenient status-quo that had led to the fraudulent adulteration of wine by the large négociant houses and the fall-out would eventually lead to a number of growers bottling their own wine. This movement of grower bottling began with a small number of estates (d'Angerville, Gouges, Rousseau), but today the majority of quality minded growers put their own labels on what they produce and the move away from négociant bottling has fundamentally changed the way we think about and buy Burgundy.

In terms of terroir Volnay sits on a limestone base, although there are a variety of soils in different parts of the village. Some are very stony (such as Taille Pieds and Clos des Ducs), some are a combination of stone, lime and clay (Champans and Caillerets) and some have heavier clay rich soil (Mitans and Brouillards). Over the village border in Santenots the soil is rocky with larger stones and is rich in clay. As might be expected, the clay rich soils tend to give the more powerful wines of Volnay, whereas the gravelly and stonier sights with higher lime content yield wines with more finesse and elegance.

The style of Volnay is typically for poise over power and the wines are often compared to those of Chambolle-Musigny in the Cote de Nuits. The best examples certainly show wonderful finesse and despite being 'lighter' than their counterparts in Pommard or Beaune, they age better than any other reds in the Cote de Beaune (with the possible exception of Corton).

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## Domaine Jean (now Henri) Boillot

Volnay (15.31 hectares)

The Boillot family is one of many branches, but the closest thing we have to the original family domaine has been known as Domaine Henri Boillot since 2005, although 'Tiki' (as Henri's friends call him) has been making the wines since 1985.

It was a long a protracted process to settle the dispute between Henri, his brother Jean-Marc and their sister Jeanine relating to who should get what from Domaine Jean Boillot and Domaine Etienne Sauzet (their maternal grandfather). The upshot of it all is that Henri is in charge at what was Jean Boillot (as was his paternal grandfather's wish), Jeanine and her husband Gerard Boudot are in Puligny at Domaine Etienne Sauzet and Jean-Marc has set up on his own in Pommard.

Henri's wines have rapidly become some of the most highly respected and sought after in Burgundy, with critics raving about their concentration and purity of fruit. He isn't shy when it comes to low yields or new oak and his 'no compromise' attitude has won him many fans.

1: 2001 Volnay 1er Cru 'Fremiets'; Domaine Jean Boillot  
13% ABV

Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
10	<del>£49.95</del>	£44.96

## Domaine Jean-Marc Boillot

Pommard (9.70 hectares)

Once Henri took over the family domaine in 1985 Jean-Marc decided it was time to move on - apparently there is not much love lost between the two brothers. So move on he did, first to become head wine maker for the ebullient Olivier Leflaive in Puligny and then to set up on his own in Pommard. Today his landholdings stretch to just under 10 hectares, with the white vines coming from the Sauzet settlement and the red vines from the Boillot side. This is supplemented by a thriving negotiant business that is highly respected for both its red and white wines.

Compared to his brother, Jean-Marc is a little more judicious with new oak choosing to give his reds a flat 50% regardless of their appellation. He tends to keep things simple with the whites too, as his philosophy is very much terroir driven and he likes to treat the wines in a similar fashion through their elevage in order to maximise the expression of the specific vineyard site.

Jean-Marc also owns an estate in Pic St Loup in the Languedoc.

2: 1996 Volnay 1er Cru 'Pitures'; Domaine Jean-Marc Boillot  
13% ABV

Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
2	<del>£65.95</del>	£59.36

## Domaine de la Pousse d'Or

Volnay (17.00 hectares)

Pousse d'or is a domaine with a rich and turbulent history, but it is undoubtedly one of the most important domaines in Volnay. The 17 hectares of vines include recently purchased parcels in Chambolle-Musigny, Corton and Puligny-Montrachet, although it for the Volnay 1er Crus that the domaine is best known. The domaine is blessed with some excellent terroir and has the distinction of owning three monopole 1er cru vineyards in Volnay - Clos de la Bousse d'Or, Clos des 60 Ouvrées and Clos de l'Audignac.

Originally, Pousse d'Or was the southern portion of the famous Duvault-Blochét estate that included Clos des Tart and Domaine de la Romanée-Conti in the Cote de Nuits. In 1964, this Cote de Beaune section was turned into Domaine de la Pousse d'Or by a consortium fronted by Gerard Potel and over the following 30 years his estate bottled wines gathered quite a reputation. By the mid 90s Gerard's son Nicolas had joined the domaine and following a number of shifts in the ownership of shares the domaine was part owned by the Potel's and part owned by a group of Australian investors. This situation turned sour in 1997 when, at the annual general meeting of the shareholders, the Australians announced that they were selling their share to an industrialist called Patrick Landanger. Incredibly (not to mention tragically), Gerard Potel dropped dead that same day and after stepping in to buy the Potel share of the domaine, Landanger became the sole owner. This series of events was the end of the Potel family's involvement in the domaine and with the money from the deal Nicolas left to set up his own negotiant business.

So, the day before the meeting Landanger was a prosthetics tycoon with tens of millions of Euros burning a hole in his pocket (he had just sold his business to Johnson & Johnson) and the morning after the meeting he was in sole charge of Domaine de la Pousse d'Or, without any wine making experience whatsoever! He decided to invest heavily in the winery and release his first vintage in 1999, but in the meantime he had the 1997 vintage maturing in his cellar (Potel died after he had finished the fermentations) and a mountain of mismanaged paperwork that was full of declaration errors for the '97 harvest. The upshot was that he had to declassify most of his Volnay 1er Crus and the village Volnay that we are drinking tonight is in fact 1er Cru 'Caillerets'.

Since Landanger has learnt the ropes the modern styled wines have seen steady improvement year on year, although he has courted controversy thanks to his use of a 'reverse-osmosis' machine used to concentrate the grape musts.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
3: 1997 Volnay; Domaine de la Pousse d'Or 13% ABV	65	£ <del>30.95</del>	£27.86

\*\*\*This wine is actually a declassified 1997 Volnay 1er Cru 'Les Caillerets', as can be seen on the cork\*\*\*

## THE DOMAINES

## Domaine Jean-Marc Bouley

Volnay (7.16 hectares)

This domaine is one of the rising stars of Volnay, with quality improving year on year, although the landholding has actually shrunk by nearly half since 2002 when some of their lease agreements expired.

Jean-Marc's son Thomas is now very much part of the wine making team and their line-up includes cuvées from some of the top climats in Volnay and Pommard and an interesting (and great value) wine called Clos de la Cave, which is essentially the family's back garden.

In the 1980s the domaine favoured somewhat lavish use of new oak, giving their better wines 100%. This was scaled back during the 90s and today the majority of wines receive between 30-50% resulting in greater purity and terroir definition.

The pick of Bouley's Volnay 1er Crus is the Clos des Chenes, a wine made from 50 year old vines that he only produces 200 cases of per year.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
4: 1995 Volnay 1er Cru 'Clos des Chênes'; Domaine J M Bouley 13% ABV	11	<del>£58.95</del>	£52.88

## Domaine Robert (now Michel) Ampeau

Meursault (9.42 hectares)

Domaine Ampeau was born at the turn of the 20th century and became famous under Robert Ampeau for the sublime quality of his whites from Meursault and Puligny, and sumptuous reds from Volnay Santenots. Since Robert passed away in 2004 his son Michel has been in sole charge and that is unlikely to change, as he has never married or had children and has no brothers or sisters.

An interesting part of the Ampeau sales strategy is that they are one of very few domaines to hold back their wines until they are somewhat ready to drink (usually at least 5 years). This is because the wines are made with ageability as a top priority, so while his reds can be very tannic early in life, they open up beautifully after a few years in bottle.

Vinification follows traditional lines, with the red wines being fermented in concrete tanks before being transferred to oak barrels - only 10% of which are new.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
5: 1992 Volnay 1er Cru 'Santenots'; Domaine Robert Ampeau 13% ABV	15	<del>£34.95</del>	£31.46

## Domaine de Montille

Volnay (17.02 hectares)

Domaine de Montille is as famous for the quality of its wine as it is for the personality of the man that established its reputation - Hubert de Montille. His appearance in the film 'Mondovino' and run-ins with the Wine Advocate ensured that Hubert was one of Burgundy's most talked about vigneron, although nowadays Hubert is retired and his highly skilled son Etienne has been in charge of the domaine since the mid 1990s. Etienne and his sister Alix also run a micro-negociant business 'Les Deux Montilles'.

It was following the second world war that Hubert was thrust to the forefront of his family domaine following the death of his father. Having grown up in a wine family he was already well-versed in wine making, but by working alongside his Aunt and Uncle over the next seven years he was fully up to speed by 1954 when he was left in sole charge. Despite being a vigneron, Hubert had pursued legal studies and thanks to the help of his family at the domaine he was able to set up a practice in Dijon, giving him a long and celebrated dual career as a lawyer and wine maker.

Hubert's outspoken nature came to the fore in 1993 when, following the 'Faiveley affair', he refused to allow Robert Parker to visit the domaine to taste his wines. De Montille was one of a group of vigneron that took this stance, although he was to soften his policy and allow Pierre Rovani (one of Parker's employees) in to his cellar despite the fact that he was openly hostile to Rovani and Parker whenever they crossed paths. The situation continued like this for a few years before coming to a head at a restaurant in Beaune where Rovani and Parker were dining with friends. On his way back from the restaurant toilet, Rovani met de Montille who was dining in the same establishment. Rovani asked Hubert how he was doing, to which de Montille responded 'I'm very contented ever since 9/11' (that evening was the anniversary of the attack). Needless to say, Rovani reacted strongly to the comment and in the end the two parties had to be separated with the Wine Advocate posse leaving the restaurant. Within hours the fracas was all over the internet and a large section of Parker's American audience boycotted the de Montille wines.

Things have quietened down now and, to the majority of the Burgundy buying public that never knew anything about all that, the wines continue to be a benchmark for Volnay. Etienne has continued the policy of making wines that are intended to age, but he has improved the accessibility of wines that (under his father) were often difficult to enjoy early in their lives before blossoming into beautiful examples once they reached maturity.

New oak is relatively low (ranging from 0% on the village wines to 50% for the Grand Crus) and the preference is very much for elegantly styled wines that reflect their terroir rather than a house style. Since the acquisition of some prime parcels of vines in the Cote de Nuits, Domaine de Montille is one of the few top drawer domaines that straddles both cotes.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
6: 1999 Volnay 1er Cru 'Champans'; Domaine de Montille 12.5% ABV	1	£69.95	£62.96

## Domaine Michel Lafarge

Volnay (11.68 hectares)

One of the most underrated estates in Burgundy, Domaine Lafarge has begun to get the credit it deserves over the past decade and is rightfully recognised today as one of the best producers of red wine in the Cote d'Or. The domaine can trace its history back to the early 19th century and during the 1930s it was one of the original band of rebels that began domaine bottling along with d'Angerville, Gouges *et al.* The vast majority of the estate's vines are in Volnay and include the 1er Cru monopole of 'Clos du Chateau des Ducs'.

Michel has been in charge of the domaine since 1960 and is now ably assisted by his son Frederic. The approach of the domaine in viticulture, wine making and style of the wines has remained largely traditional and it is interesting to see that their preferences for indigenous yeasts, pruning rather than green harvesting and judicious use of oak have all started to become fashionable again. This is a domaine that is not interested in new ideas for the sake of it, although they have embraced the idea of biodynamics - perhaps not too much of a surprise when you consider their long standing objections to chemical treatments.

Much of the vinification is approached in a flexible manner, with key decisions being taken according to the conditions specific to the vintage. Fermentation length and temperature, the percentage of new oak used and the frequency of *pigeage* or pumping over will vary from year to year, but the fruit is always completely destemmed and the Lafarges harvest relatively early to capture freshness and give the wines the acidity required for them to age well. New oak is kept to an absolute minimum, which will usually mean none for generics and village wines and just 15% for the 1er crus.

Available

Retail price

Tasting special  
bottle price

7: 1999 Volnay 1er Cru 'Clos du Chateau des Ducs'; Domaine Michel Lafarge  
13% ABV

n/a

£80.00

n/a

## Domaine des Comtes Lafon

Meursault (13.81 hectares)

Comtes Lafon may be one of the most revered names in Burgundy today, but for many years it was merely a play thing for the *bon viveur* Jules Lafon and then an inconvenience for his work shy son Henri. During the 1950s Henri decided it was time to sell the domaine (by this time he had already sold the art, antiques and pretty much everything else the family owned) but his nephew René stepped in to prevent the sale and take over as *régisseur*. During his tenure René began to reclaim some of the land that was being farmed by other families *en métayage* and by the time his son Dominique took over responsibility for the domaine in 1984 they were focused on bringing all of their vines back under Lafon management. Finally, by 1993 Dominique had the full 13.81 hectares at his disposal and he continued to make wholesale changes to the way the estate was run - including the shift to biodynamic viticulture that was complete by 1998.

Although the domaine's reputation is based on their world-class white wines from Meursault, they are certainly no slouches in the Pinot Noir department and are justly famous for making the best example of Volnay 1er Cru from the Santenots vineyard (which is actually in Meursault). Santenots-du-Mileu is the best section of the vineyard and this is where Lafon's vines are planted.

The Santenots is harvested very ripe and after an élevage that includes regular *pigeage*, 35% new oak and often 20 months maturation in barrel. The result is a tannic wine that is built to last, combining the richness and relative power that comes from the deep clay rich soils with the elegance and purity that fans of Lafon's wines have come to expect.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
8: 1990 Volnay 1er Cru 'Santenots du Milieu'; Domaine des Comtes Lafon 13.5% ABV	n/a	£230	£207

## Domaine Marquis d'Angerville

Volnay (14.95 hectares)

An undisputed member of Burgundian royalty, Domaine Marquis d'Angerville was assembled in the early 19th century by the Baron de Mesnil who purchased the house that is still home to the Marquis and the almost 15 hectares of prime vineyard land in and around Volnay. The estate was always held in high regard, but it was during the 1920s that people really began to sit up and take notice of the domaine, when Jacques d'Angerville (the Marquis at the time) led the fight against the large negociants and pioneered domaine bottling. The mantle was taken on by Jacques (son of Jacques) who established the domaine's wines as some of Burgundy's finest and, following his death in 2003, the current Marquis Guillaume has continued the tradition.

It is Domaine Marquis d'Angerville that has done more than any to cement the reputation of Volnay's wines, from both a political and wine making perspective. Back in the '20s, Jacques was concerned that the fraudulent behaviour of negociants was damaging the reputation of Burgundy's villages - they were adulterating wines with juice from inferior villages, regions and in some cases countries (Algerian wine was often used). This sorry saga had started in the previous century when it wasn't illegal to do so, but following the 1919 Appellation laws d'Angerville took the negociants to court for failure to comply with the rules. Once he and his friends had won the court battle, a group of like minded producers decided to bottle their own wine and label it themselves as opposed to selling it to negociants (Jadot, Bouchard, Latour etc) that blended it with other wine and sold it under their label. This movement towards 'domaine bottling' took some time to get off the ground but today it is the norm.

The wines at d'Angerville are all destemmed and not much new oak is employed, as is the case with most of the top domaines in the village. The results are wonderfully elegant wines that begin life with plenty of concentration but soften into delightfully pure examples of the best vineyards in Volnay.

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
9: 1986 Volnay 1er Cru 'Clos des Ducs'; Domaine Marquis d'Angerville 12.8% ABV	n/a	£88.95	n/a

	Available	Retail price	Tasting special bottle price
10: 2006 Volnay 1er Cru 'Fremiets'; Domaine Marquis d'Angerville 13.5% ABV	10	£44.95	£40.45