

**Pittsburgh**LIVE.com**PITTSBURGH  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW**

## Pitiot restores excitement to Clos-de-Tart vintages

**By Dave DeSimone****FOR THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW***Wednesday, October 19, 2005*

On a recent trip to Burgundy, I had the opportunity to visit and taste recent vintages with Clos-de-Tart's current winemaker, Sylvain Pitiot. Clearly since arriving in 1996 Pitiot has masterfully restored the excitement to the wines of this famous domaine.

Beginning his career as a surveyor and cartographer before switching to winemaking, Pitiot has a unique familiarity with every mete and bound of Burgundy's greatest vineyards. He is justly proud of the beautiful "clos," or low enclosed stone wall, still surrounding the domaine's ancient stone farmhouse, enormous antique wine press and two levels of deep cellars.

But for Pitiot, the real tour begins in the vineyards up behind the main buildings. Standing at the foot of the gently sloping sea of precisely tended vines that only 10 days earlier had been heavy with ripe grapes, Pitiot points out that the 17 prime acres within Clos-de-Tart lie on a direct north-south axis with Burgundy's other great vineyards such Chambertin, Clos des Lambrays, Bonnes Mares and Musigny. All the vineyards share geological breeding with essentially stony surfaces atop a limestone base.

Within the Clos-de-Tart itself, Pitiot identifies six distinct parcels, each with slightly different soils and microclimates requiring slightly different tending of vines. The vines have an average age of 35 years, but some are as old as 55. They are meticulously tended and harvested by hand. Chemical treatments are limited, and the yields per vine are kept low. Each parcel is fermented separately before Pitiot determines the blend of the final wine depending on the vintage.

Stepping back into the winery's cool air redolent with the heady, seductive yeasty aromas of still fermenting grapes, Pitiot points out stainless steel fermentation tanks that allow a slow maceration using only natural yeasts. After descending two levels to the lowest aging cellar, it was instructive to taste unblended wines from separate parcels and still in barrel from the 2004 vintage.

The wine from made grapes grown on Clos-de-Tart's lower slope, where there is more clay in the soil, have a light, elegant, almost flowery character with

### Discussions

- [Wine Talk](#)

Share your opinion in our discussion boards.

### Wine Rack Newsletter



### Tools

- [Print this article](#)
- [E-mail this article](#)
- [Subscribe to this paper](#)
- [Larger](#) / [Smaller](#) Text



pleasant raspberry fruitiness and medium concentration. The wine made from grapes grown further up the stony slope have more depth and layers of dark concentrated fruit on firm backbone and silky tannins. Together, they will undoubtedly make a fine expression of *terroir* with Pitiot's steady hand guiding the final wine.

Further perspective on recent vintages in Burgundy came from meeting with a number of other fine producers, including Christian Clerget of Domaine Clerget in Vougeot; David Croix, winemaker at Camille Giroud in Beaune; and chief executive officer Frederic Drouhin of Maison Robert Drouhin.

There was broad agreement that 2000 produced pleasant wines of limited depth for drinking now, while the 2001's merit a very bullish stance, despite much publicized skepticism from many professional wine critics. The 2001's present a classic, well-balanced and precise vintage where *terroir* really shines through especially in the wines of the Côte de Nuits north of Beaune. They are wines for aging gracefully for 10, 15, even 20 years.

The 2002 vintage enjoyed a miraculously bright and dry September to produce wines with more robust, pure fruit, adequate acidity and soft, ripe tannins reminiscent of the 1999's. The 2002's are drinking well now, but will undoubtedly also improve with cellar aging.

The 2003 red burgundies are an anomaly thanks to one of the hottest vintages on record in 800 years. Alcohol levels reached a gaudy 15 percent while the ultra-ripe, saturated fruit reminded many winemakers, including Pitiot, of syrah or California zinfandels rather than Burgundy pinot noir. Nevertheless, many international wine critics ballyhooed the vintage with great hyperbole and comparisons to the wines of 1990, another very hot vintage.

While the 2003 wines are pleasant enough to drink now, their overwhelming ripeness essentially nullified true expression of *terroir* in most instances. Just as the heralded 1990s have yet to develop elegant finesse, it may be difficult for the 2003 wines to improve while aging gracefully.

The 2004's, according to Pitiot, Clerget, and Drouhin, bear more similarity to the 2001's in expressing distinct *terroir*, but with a touch more ripeness. The 2005's by all accounts should be superb on a par with the 1999's or 2002's. For the present try the following wines:

**2002 Louis Jadot, Chambolle-Musigny** (Specialty 19776, \$34.99): Pleasant ripe fruit with nuances of violets balanced by pleasant, ripe "stemminess" and silky tannins. **Recommended.**

**2000 Domaine Robert Arnoux, Nuits-Saint-Georges** (7760, \$39.99): This wine from a leading producer has dark berry fruit framed by classic "rustic," earthy Nuits-Saint-George nuances. **Highly Recommended.**

**2001 Joseph Drouhin, "Clos-des-Mouches" Rouge, 1er Cru** (Specialty 19098, \$39.99): This is undoubtedly the best value in red Burgundy currently in the PLCB system. Precise, clean aromas and flavors with silky tannins. **Highly Recommended.**

**2003 Camille Giroud, Aloxe-Corton "Les Cras"** (Available nationally at \$42.00): Big, spicy cassis and black cherry fruit with good acidity and ripe tannins. **Recommended.**

**2000 Clos de Tart** (Specialty 19846, \$133.99): **Recommended.**

*Dave DeSimone can be reached at [ddesimone@tribweb.com](mailto:ddesimone@tribweb.com) or .*



Images and text copyright © 2004 by The Tribune-Review Publishing Co.  
Reproduction or reuse prohibited without written consent from [PittsburghLIVE](http://PittsburghLIVE.com).