



IN REVIEW:

Domaine Claude Dugat Charmes-Chambertin & Griotte-Chambertin Dinner

© Linden Wilkie, May 2017

My unabashed adoration for the wines of Claude Dugat began in the summer of 2002. I visited the cellars and tasted the 2001s from barrel and they just blew me away. Ever since then tasting a bottle from his domaine has felt like a treat. Any bottle from his domaine. When I visit Beaune each year his Bourgogne Rouge AOC is one of the few of that humble appellation level I have happily bought and drunk, and his village level Gevrey-Chambertin is a benchmark for the intensity, dark fruit and spice the appellation is capable of delivering.

So you can imagine my excitement at the chance not only to sample his two *grands crus* - *Charmes-Chambertin* and *Griotte-Chambertin* - side by side, but to do so down a vertical of 6 vintages, with 2 fully mature vintages of Charmes to finish. AND, to do so in Hong Kong, at a dinner tutored by Allen Meadows and Claude Dugat himself (his first visit to Hong Kong).

The wines lived up to the excitement. You *must* try a Claude Dugat *grand cru* at least one. Looking back at my notes, I would say, just pick anything and see for yourself. These sit on the top shelf.



My own reflections on the wines tasted are these –

1. Even when you taste the wines quite young, or early in their evolution – such as the pair of 2005s (a vintage known for both quality and tannic structure – often not at all yet ready to drink) – they are rich, pure, intense, yet seductive. They start to drink earlier than some other domaines. This, I think, is what Claude refers to in his aim to capture Pinot Noir's 'generous and elegant side' (see Dugat's comments below).
2. At the other end of the time scale, when many wines are starting to show threadbare, Claude's wines continue to sail along, with plenty in reserve. Quality is immaculate, and intensity is impressive.
3. The two personalities of Charmes and Griotte were quite clear, vintage pair by vintage pair. We often think of Charmes-Chambertin as the soft and easy Gevrey *grand cru*, but here – to me – it seems more substantial and structured. The Dugat approach may have something to do with that, but I wonder too if we can point to his particular *lieu dit* within the vineyard for this. The Charmes is so good that I could not possibly want for another wine... except that the Griotte-Chambertin is just astonishing, in the character and generosity of its fruit, and its purity and fine definition. Here – for me – I think I have found a true grail wine.
4. A number of the best growers in Burgundy can match Claude Dugat, but I have not tasted any that surpass him – at least to my palate. These *grands crus* are now very expensive, and very scarce (look at the size of his holdings and that is easy to understand), but given their quality, well worth acquiring... and drinking!



My tasting notes follow. But first, rather than give you any more of my own perspective, here is what I jotted down of what Claude Dugat himself had to say, as kindly interpreted from his French into English for us by Allen Meadows...

Claude Dugat:

We have 6.5 hectares. My son and two daughters are the fifth generation. It's a small operation. My grandparents and parents couldn't survive just making wine. My father also worked as a vine grafter. We work 7 AOCs, 100% of which are in Gevrey-Chambertin. We have Bourgogne Rouge, Gevrey-Chambertin, one 1er Cru (Lavaux Saint-Jacques), and 3 grands crus (Chapelle-Chambertin, Charmes-Chambertin, and Griotte-Chambertin). We are five people doing the work – my wife Marie-Thérèse (who attended the dinner with Claude) and me, and our 3 children.

It's a blessing that all of our vines are in Gevrey-Chambertin because we can get from one vineyard to the next very quickly.

Philosophically I am looking for amiability – for Pinot Noir's generous and elegant side.

The vine is a living thing. Even though we cannot communicate with the vine, the work we expend on the vine is reflected in it.

I'm not looking for a lot of extraction. If the quality of the fruit is good enough the wine will naturally extract itself. Usually we would do two punchings down per day over a 15 day cuvaion. Elevage is usually 18 months, with the higher appellations receiving more wood, usually 100% new in the case of the *grands crus*. There is no fining and no filtration prior to bottling.

Our piece of Charmes (0.33ha) is on a small hill within the vineyard, at the southern end. The soil here is about 15-20cm deep and is quite compact underneath. (I would add, that at this domaine the Charmes is often more powerful than the Griotte. Marie-Thérèse prefers this over the Griotte).

The Griotte-Chambertin (0.16ha) has more fragmented rock so the vines can more easily descend into the soil. It makes a wine that is easier to approach, and more generous than the Charmes.

(I would add that the fruit in the Griotte often feels



more precisely defined, more intensely fruity, yet also more elegant in style of the two. Claude prefers the Griotte of the two, ironically, for its charm!).

2005 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 95 Points

Clear, full colour ; generous sweet cherry on the nose, great purity ; succulent on the palate, pure, velvet texture, with fine mineral depth, gorgeous bright fruit. This is a sleek, sensuous yet precise and harmonious wine, that despite the depth of structure is already so pleasurable to drink – as I am now!

2005 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 97 Points

Deep colour and a touch of fine sediment in evidence ; a deep, vibrant bright dark cherry-led nose, a touch of earth/bark, and some spice on the nose ; super fleshy on the palate, meticulously well defined, fruity, mineral. More density of fruit compared to the Charmes. Delicious. Exceptional.

2002 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 95 Points

Clear, mid depth of colour with a developed rim ; fine, sweet aromas with earth and leaf notes, fragrant ; elegant in style with fine concentration, transparency, precision and length. This is beautiful caressing Charmes, drinking perfectly now. Beautiful. An exceptional '02.

2002 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 96 Points

Clear, a deeper shade than the Charmes; gorgeous sweet nose, succulently generous and super aromatic; concentrated, generous and youthful still on the palate, layered, pure, with exquisite fruit. Gentle texture like the '05. More power and ample texture than the Charmes. Gorgeous wine. Still young.

2001 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat N/R

Bottle variation with this. The first had a fairly deep colour, though some tone advancement – this followed on the nose and palate with just a little oxidation creeping in to what was otherwise a rich, sweet and flavoury wine. The other bottle was fresher, superior with a great intensity of fruit and piquant acidity. I didn't get the chance to write more on it, lest to say a good fresh bottle should show young and full of fruit and vigor still.

2001 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 97 Points

A touch deeper in shade compared to the better of the two bottles of '01 Charmes – still a lot of colour ; a super bright sweet cherry and plum nose ; fresh, super succulent, rounded, gorgeous fruit, seductive, ample and long on the palate. Bright – just to die for fruit. The acidity is pure fresh fruit in expression. This is a profound, extraordinary wine.

1999 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 97 Points

A deep fresh colour, ruby ; lovely bright sweet fruit nose, reserved ; succulent on the palate, intense fruit, some oak gloss, very youthful still, fine tannins, with full depth and structure. Young tasting but delicious. Less 'ready' than the 2005. However, over the next couple of hours this opened up wonderfully, if slowly. It began to feel silkier, melting in texture, with an astonishing level of pure-fruited concentration. An amazing Charmes.

1999 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 97 Points

A deep ruby with a touch of development at the rim; a sweet nose, with a 'Jayer'-like popcorn oak note, musky; super silky textured, seductive, very deep, dark fruit, dark cherry flavour, layered. A grand Griotte. Beautiful. So young.

I made a side note in my notes at this point – 'The 1999s are more candied fruit – seductively so. The 2001s are more pure fresh-fruited in expression.'

1997 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 93 Points

Light depth of garnet, mautre rim ; savoury-sweet open spicy and exuberant nose ; candied fruit notes, round, voluptupus, silky and ample, seductive, silky, glycerin-driven wine. Complex. Not profound and deep like the 2001, but open, complex and delicious nonetheless.

1997 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 92 Points

Full colour ; sweet fruit, leather notes, spicy on the nose ; rich, plump fruit, a touch of leather, spicy, with some oak.vanillin notes. You feel the elevage here more than in the Charmes.

1995 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 94 Points

Deep colour with a developed rim ; sweet yet reserved rich nose; wonderful fruit on the palate – rich cherry with a touch of dark chocolate ("Cherry Ripe"), intense fruit, fine acidity, firm but ripe and fine tannins. Great definition of fruit, density yet freshness. The oak is evident. This has the 1995 shape (firm, solid), but is more succulent, fruity and round than typical '95s. It is more typically Dugat! Superb.

1995 Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 96 Points

Fine clear garnet with a mature rim ; a succulent nose; a touch of grilled hazelnut, super fleshy, unctuous open and delicious. This has brilliant purity, freshness, definition, brightness and length. It is rather 2010-like in its style and relative sense of age. An extraordinary 1995.

1993 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 98 Points

Bright clear and lively –a lovely colour ; sweet and smoky on the nose ; incredible fruit and succulence on the palate, the freshness is astonishing. Notes of tea, spice, and such silky seduction. One of the best wines I've ever had.

1990 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, Domaine Claude Dugat 95 Points

Bright with some colour depth, mature rim ; sweet roasted fruits nose – lovely ; seductive, ripe, fresh and delicious. This feels fully at its peak of bottle development, with no edges, great softness, yet the fine acidity keeps its shape and definition. This is really seductive Charmes, fully evolved, but showing zero tiredness. Fantastic wine.



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