

Bouchard Père & Fils

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By *Per-Henrik Mansson*

Fearing rot and rain during harvesttime, vintner Joseph Henriot and his team at Bouchard Père & Fils didn't hesitate to pick early and quickly in 2000. Never mind if that meant that their grapes were a bit less ripe than those picked by some neighbors in the Côte d'Or, where Bouchard is the largest vineyard holder, with 321 acres, two-thirds of that in premiers crus and grands crus.

"Every year we are rather vigilant about preserving a good level of natural acidity," said winemaker Philippe Prost, 45, whose boss is against acidifying wines by adding tartaric acid. "So it is important for us to harvest healthy grapes without rot." Bouchard began the harvest on Sept. 11, the earliest since 1976.

Prost seems to have played this challenging vintage just right. I tasted only a fraction of the wines made yearly by Bouchard. But of 13 wines, 10 were very good to outstanding. They were neither big nor overextracted, just supple, fruity red Burgundies that are exquisite to drink in the short term. The 2000s spent less time than is typical in new oak barrels, and most wines reviewed here were bottled about three months earlier than usual to preserve the fruit.

Henriot declassified 15 percent of the crop from Bouchard's premier cru flagship to maintain the quality of the Beaune Grèves Vigne de l'Enfant Jésus (85-89); it has silky texture, yet firm tannins, with mineral and black cherry.

The supple and aromatic premier cru Monthélie Clos les Champs Fulliot (85-89) shows a floral perfume, good acidity and silky tannins. The Volnay Caillerets Ancienne Cuvée Carnot (85-89) is silky, rich and ripe, with licorice, spice and red berries.

Among the grands crus, Clos Vougeot (90-94) is elegant and refined, with silky tannins, smoke and black cherries. Too bad only 350 bottles are made of the nearly flawless Chambertin (95-100), full-bodied, with great fruit and mineral character.

