



Nuits-St-Georges 2009

While there are no grands crus in this varied, sprawling appellation, the premiers crus offer great longevity via wines of both structure and elegance, says Stephen Brook

THE VINEYARDS OF Nuits-St-Georges sprawl, making any typicity difficult to grasp. They continue well south of the town into the village of Prémieux-Prissey, and north to the outskirts of Vosne-Romanée. Not surprisingly, the microclimates and soils vary considerably. However, it is difficult to grasp exactly how one part of the appellation differs from the other. There is less clay to the north, where the wines often show more elegance than those from further south. The greater proportion of clay to the south and in Prémieux gives weightier, more tannic and often less elegant wines. Around the town, stony soils give robust and energetic wines from renowned sites such as Chaboeufs, Perrières, Rue de Chaux, Vaucrains and Les St-Georges.

Elevation is also key. Producer Bertrand Ambroise observes that wines from higher on the slopes tend to be more structured. Indeed, the common perception of Nuits is that it delivers wines of structure and longevity comparable in some ways to those of Gevrey-Chambertin. While this can be true, there is no shortage of fragrant, charming, elegant wines that do not meet these criteria, yet can still be long-lived despite their apparent fragility. Winemaking inevitably plays its part in style. The Prémieux vineyard Clos de la Maréchale, leased for many years to Faiveley, reverted some years ago to its actual owner, Frédéric Mugnier. As others have noted, the Faiveley wines were tannic and dense; the Mugnier wines are more graceful. All to do with winemaking rather than terroir.

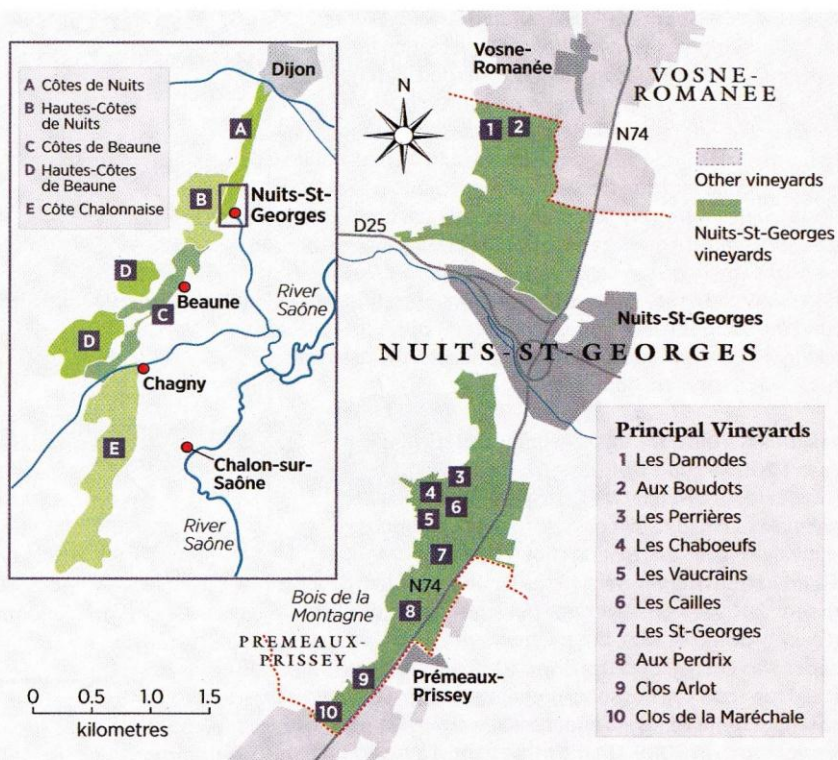
Almost half the Nuits vineyards are premier cru, some of which are monopoles belonging to individual growers. Generic Nuits is more the preserve of négociant houses, as Nuits-St-Georges on the label offers immediate brand recognition. Individual growers make some fine village wines, but overall quality can be patchy and in general it's worth paying the premium for a premier cru, which is likely to have more concentration and longevity.

Real personality

Nuits has no grands crus. In the 1930s, when this became an issue, many growers were reluctant to see changes in status to their best vineyards because of the fiscal consequences and the probability that lower yields would be demanded. A few growers such as Thibault Liger-Belair would like to see the top sites promoted to grand cru, but there is insufficient groundswell to make this likely in the near future. The most prestigious sites, such as Vaucrains and Les St Georges, have always sold for higher prices, showing that the market recognises their quality.

Nuits wines tend not to be as prized as those from Chambolle or Vosne, which is a shame. The village is home to some excellent domaines that produce an array of contrasting premiers crus with real personality, and at this level the wines from top négociants can be of equal quality.

2009 was a great vintage, yet not uniformly so. The crop was large, so those who picked too early would have had some unripe fruit and wines with greenness. Those who delayed too long ran the risk of jammy wines with high alcohol, although in practice such wines are far less common than originally feared. There are plausible doubts about whether the 2009s will age as well as the 2005s, but it's still too early to pronounce on this with confidence.



Nuits-St-Georges: know your vintages

2010 Early days, but a difficult summer with some rot.

2009 Great vintage, but a handful of overripe wines. See left.

2008 Difficult year saved by a fine end-season. Nuits fared well. Selection essential.

2007 Some rot required selection, giving medium-term wines of considerable charm.

2006 Uneven vintage but some excellent wines made. Medium-term drinking for most.

2005 Excellent, with a healthy crop giving fleshy, long-lived wines.

2004 A poor summer gave medium-bodied wines of patchy quality.

2003 Utterly atypical growing season resulted in wildly inconsistent wines: *caveat emptor*.

2002 Classic year, with succulent and balanced wines.

2001 Underrated vintage after a cool September. Many excellent wines.

2000 A difficult year, with some rot. Better in Nuits than elsewhere. Drinking well now.

1999 A huge crop, but rich, sensuous wines. Some lack a little acidity.

Nuits-St-Georges facts

Villages vineyards 175ha
Premier cru vineyards 147ha
Number of premiers crus 41

Varieties 100% Pinot Noir for red, but 6ha of white grapes (Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc) including some in premier cru sites

Stephen Brook is a Decanter contributing editor and past winner of the Trophée des Grands Jours de Bourgogne



Highly Recommended 14.5-16.49 pts



**Domaine Jean Chauvenet,
Aux Argillas 1er Cru** 17.38

£44 Handford, Richards Walford, WoodWinters

Dark fruit, spice, liquorice and toffee aroma.

Lovely structure with earthy, classic lines and spicy black fruit. Quite a tannic, brisk wine with good tight acidity and a very linear finish. Very promising. **Drink:** 2014-2020. **Alc:** 13.5%

3- STAR WINES Recommended 14.5-16.49 pts

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Les Damodes

Score : 16.38

Shy nose of cherry, spice, flowers and minerals. Concentrated, with a silky texture and soft red fruit flavours, it is a big wine which is punchy and enjoyable.

Alc. 13.5%

Drink: 2012

Stockists: Handford, Richards Walford, WoodWinters.

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Rue de Chaux

Score : 16.25

Intense aromas of blackberry, redcurrant, spice, oak, minerals and blueberry. Warm fruit palate of savoury smoky intrigue and minerals. Vivid and detailed.

Alc. 13.5%

Drink: 2015-2020

Stockists: Handford, Richards Walford

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Les Vaucrains

Score : 16.17

Brooding cherry, charred oak, mineral and black fruit nose. Has power and vigour with good typicity. Rich and compact, with tannins under control. Let it unravel.

Alc. 13.5%

Drink: 2014

Stockists: Handford, Halsmere Cellars, Richards Walford, Wineaux, WoodWinters.

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Les Bouselots

Score : 15.13

Raw, intense nose that is almost unfinished. More gregarious on the palate, with a full body, rich, red fruit, earthy notes and stony tannins. Big and oaky.

Alc. 13.5%

Drink: 2014

Stockists: Handford, Halsmere Cellars, Richards Walford.

2- STAR WINES Poor 12.5 – 14.49 pts.

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges (13.83)

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Les Poulettes (13.83)

Domaine Jean Chauvenet – Nuits St Georges 1^{er} cru Les Perrières (13.5)