

THE SOURCE  
AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER  
PART 2 OF 4



*Mâconnais' famous Roche de Vergisson in the background and Roche de Solutré in the foreground*

We have a lot of newly arrived wines this month, and we're going to highlight a few of them throughout the month instead of our typical single-issue monthly newsletter format. Last week we shared a deep dive on Katharina Wechsler's dry 2023 German Riesling crus, Benn, Kirchspiel and Morstein. Toward the end of the month, we'll hit Italy to talk over Madonna delle Grazie's unbeatable quality-for-the-price Aglianicos and Dave Fletcher's stunning 2023 Barbaresco wines.

This week we're going to focus on two organic growers bottling exceptional wines, especially for the amount of painstaking work spent in the vineyards and cellar. Before we get to François Delaunay's Bourgueil and Chinon wines, I'm going to tell you a little story about three young men who have just turned a big corner in their development as winegrowers.

**DOMAINE CHARDIGNY**  
**2023 & 2024 SAINT-VÉLAN**

I first contacted the Chardigny brothers around 2017 after some encouragement from Jean-Louis Dutraive. The story seemed clear: Beaujolais' next up and comers. He described them first as exceptional young organic farmers and qualified it even further by telling us that he and Jean François Ganevat were buying fruit from them—about as strong an endorsement as a young grower could receive. I went in thinking they were a Beaujolais family that made some white Burgundy from Saint-Véran, too. I had it backward.



*The look of Chardigny's organic viticulture in Leynes*

Every visit to Chardigny's domaine in Leynes starts with a twenty-minute drive from the Dutraive's in Fleurie. Through Moulin-à-Vent, Chénas, Juliéna, passing by their Saint-Amour vineyards, a sharp left west at the bottom of the south hill crossing the tiny Arlois River turns toward Leynes. Everything changes so quickly as you head up the valley to Leynes after crossing the Arlois you don't realize you've just traversed about 150 million years of geologic time in the time it took to cross a creek: from Beaujolais' corner of the Variscan Massif Central to the Jurassic limestone escarpment of the Mâconnais.

Driving into Leynes, with the brain still in Beaujolais, not Mâconnais, the stone buildings and rock walls distinctly change color from pink and gray granites, the heaviness of the hard blue schist of Juliéna to the creamy white and desert-colored orange and red limestones of Saint-Veran, the atmosphere feels more polished, more ordered, people seem to move slower, the shoulders drop—undoubtedly more Burgundian than Beaujolais in the length of a small river's crossing. Even the brothers and their parents carry themselves differently than the often more rustic folk of the Beaujolais. I noticed all of it. I just didn't register. They are Mâconnais.

You don't see the majesty of the Mâconnais' most celebrated southern part, Fuissé, which on a map looks just next door but you don't see it until you work around the uplifted Le Bois de Fée ("Fairy Woods") from Leynes. The Chardigny boys' adolescence was in a time before Beaujolais went into full renaissance.

Early on it was clear that Chardigny's Beaujolais were stronger than their Saint-Véran whites. Their Chardonnays were good but they didn't connect with me and what I believed our customers would want. So, naturally we focused on their reds. 2016 was their first reasonably big commercial vintage, and their Beaujolais shined that year. It was a terribly underrated vintage due to tremendous losses in certain areas and their wines subsequently pointed toward wine drinkers more interested in Beaujolais *sans* excesses fun and more toward subtlety.

After the 2016 vintage, many of us at The Source realized that their Beaujolais wines weren't what we'd expected. They weren't the extroverted and exuberant juicy Beaujolais the market had fallen in love with. They were built by their culture across just across Arlois, and they were clearly more Burgundian in architecture and restraint. They were and remain even slightly though not completely antithetical to the trend that recharged global interest in the Beaujolais wines.

## AND THEN

Former California-based French wine importer, Betty Dunbar, told me when I started The Source, "Don't buy anything you wouldn't drink all of yourself because one day you might have to." I think part of my disassociation with their white wines is my historical lack of interest in Mâconnais Chardonnay wines. At that time we already represented great white wine growers like Jean Collet and Sébastien Christophe in Chablis, and the likes of Rodolphe Demougeot, Hubert Lamy and Pierre Morey in the Côte d'Or—the latter two only in California up until 2022. I wasn't looking for another white Burgundy domaine, and not especially in the Mâconnais. The bar set from further north was already exceptionally high, and if you're familiar with our collection of white wines across six European countries, you know that tension is hallmark on both white and red. Easy-to-drink Burgundy Chardonnay can be a bore for me—like watching the same family movie over and over again. I need some palate pressure and lightning but at the same time restraint. Even if that exists with some growers in the region, with the string of hot years between 2017 and 2023, that was most often missing. But what about 2021?

For years I shared my regular opinion with the Chardigny brothers Pierre-Maxime and Victor about their style and how they could use more austerity and electrical current because this is where our market was focused and the expectations our buyers have for the wines we import. And then, a cool 2021 season arrived. Perfect? Not really: devastating spring frost, relentless mildew pressure, localized hail and a long, cool growing season. It should have been the vintage we'd been waiting for, but they lost almost everything Chardonnay. However, their Beaujolais wines were solid that year and remain in fine form—always led with elegance.

Then the middle brother, Jean-Baptiste, returned to the family business after many years as the *chef de culture* (vineyard manager) for Leflaive's Mâconnais domaine. Victor, the last of the brothers, was already a well-respected organic viticulturalist before Jean-Baptiste came back home, so perhaps Jean-Baptiste's impact wasn't immediately apparent. What he brought to the cellar was already there in 2022 and 2023, but we were waiting for a more classic year to see his greater influence. But after their first year in 2016, the following seasons rarely gave them the opportunity to realize what they were building toward. There are successful wines in those years, but they hadn't hit the next level yet. And then 2024 arrived.

The first finished 2024 white Burgundies I tasted from any domaine were with Pierre-Maxime in December 2025. The first Chardonnays, Saint-Véran and Saint-Véran ‘Vieilles Vignes,’ recently bottled in their range immediately commanded a double take. It felt like these were the wines we waited for, and we hadn’t even tasted their top yet crus yet, Au Bois de Fée and Les Cornillaux. Those last two out of vat were not only the best wines I’ve had from them, but they seemed like they were almost made by someone else entirely. A charged and serious duo, our San Francisco Manager, Marissa Payne, was with me and we were smiles from ear to ear as we tasted those two crus from vat in their various cellars. Never did I imagine—and I don’t think she did either—that as we drove away from Chardigny toward our future visits in the Côte d’Or, Jura and Chablis that we’d both feel that the bar was just set in the effing Mâconnais.



The quality of their 2023 vintage whites crafted under a sweltering summer sun foreshadowed what was to come on the Chardonnay front. It was tough year but they did very well with them. And then when I first tasted the 2024 whites again in April of this year with my wife, everything for them finally seems to be in greater focus. Of course, one or two vintages won’t automate the vintages in their future, but certain wines occasionally allow us to look back and appreciate the process. For me, the breakthrough with their 2024 vintage is one of those moments. They turned their first big corner in 2024 with their Chardonnay wines.

## GAME ON

Both the base Saint-Véran and the Vieille Vignes (V.V.) carry the rare green tint these days, which is a clear sign of a wine I’m likely to like, a lot. With these two sort of “entry-level” Saint-Véran, both have nice subtle aromas and are relatively neutral in a pleasant way—Chardonnay unadorned. The delicate mineral and straw nose of the first **SAINT-VÉRAN** is almost Kamptal Grüner-like. It’s texture is fluid and refreshing yet sharper than the more glycerol V.V.; it’s more savory, and the fruit is soft and secondary. The frame feels unexpectedly Chablisienne, but there’s no mistaking it for Chablis. What in this wine excites me is its delicacy dancing on a wiry frame. It’s dainty. Second pour ten minutes in, it’s deepening into a light chicken bone broth—not a rich brothy flavor, just pure bone

broth from uncaramelized bones. I like its leanness, and this is well played by the stainless steel élevage. A soft brown spice comes along later with the brown nut typical of this variety. Third pour it's still flirting with a Chablis-like fluidity; it also reminds me of a Côte Chalonnaise Chardonnay but without the green and new wood; this is more straw and steel. The fourth pour nearly an hour in expresses the same smells and feel I have with 2024 Chablis vinetage wines thus far: spare in the most enticing way. We have to enjoy this kind of vintage because its rare, even if 2021 wasn't so far from it. It has very little sun in it, like the days of old: this is clouds, fresh and damp air, cool nights and wet earth. Straight away on the next day, it fleshed out a lot. It's even better.



*Jean-Baptiste (top photo), Victor (left) and Pierre-Maxime*

The **SAINT-VÉRAN VIEILLE VIGNES** smells like a stouter version of the basic Saint-Véran. Here we have hints of pear and apple, but only hints. Preserved lemon skin. It's fuller in the mouth too, but a little shorter on the finish. Richer but not rich. Fleshy but without slack. The weight and texture gains ground quickly but always stays in its lane; *this is Mâconnais after all*. Spice and some welcome green emerges with time. On the fourth pour about an hour in, it's similar to the Saint-Véran entry-level white: speaking Chablisienne but without the Kimmeridgian marly flintiness, iodine mineral, and all the specific nuances of that special northern Burgundy terroir; like Chablis without its shimmering tension and finely cut and set jewelry.

On the second day, the V.V. is more subtle in the nose compared to the Saint-Véran, but they both fleshed out a lot in the palate and have great energy and texture—more pointed texture than a typical southern Burgundy white.

Both of these first 2024 Chardigny whites are Chardonnay profiles that lean on the vintage's imparted acidity and soft mineral qualities. Perhaps the season left them rather less flashy and less fleshy in some way, leaving the bones of the terroir and cooler year speak rather than be dressed up as they often are not too much further north.

Au Bois de Fée and Les Cornillaux will come later this year. Just bottled last month, they'll cross into our orders before the year's end and land with you at the start of 2027. What's already arrived is a clear signal of what we are eagerly awaiting: two wines from their best vineyards, Chardonnay crafted with the same spirit and technique you'd expect from the Côte d'Or's better appellations. I have no doubt those two will impress, especially for their appellation. But until 2027, let's appreciate these two breakthrough bottlings from the Chardigny boys.

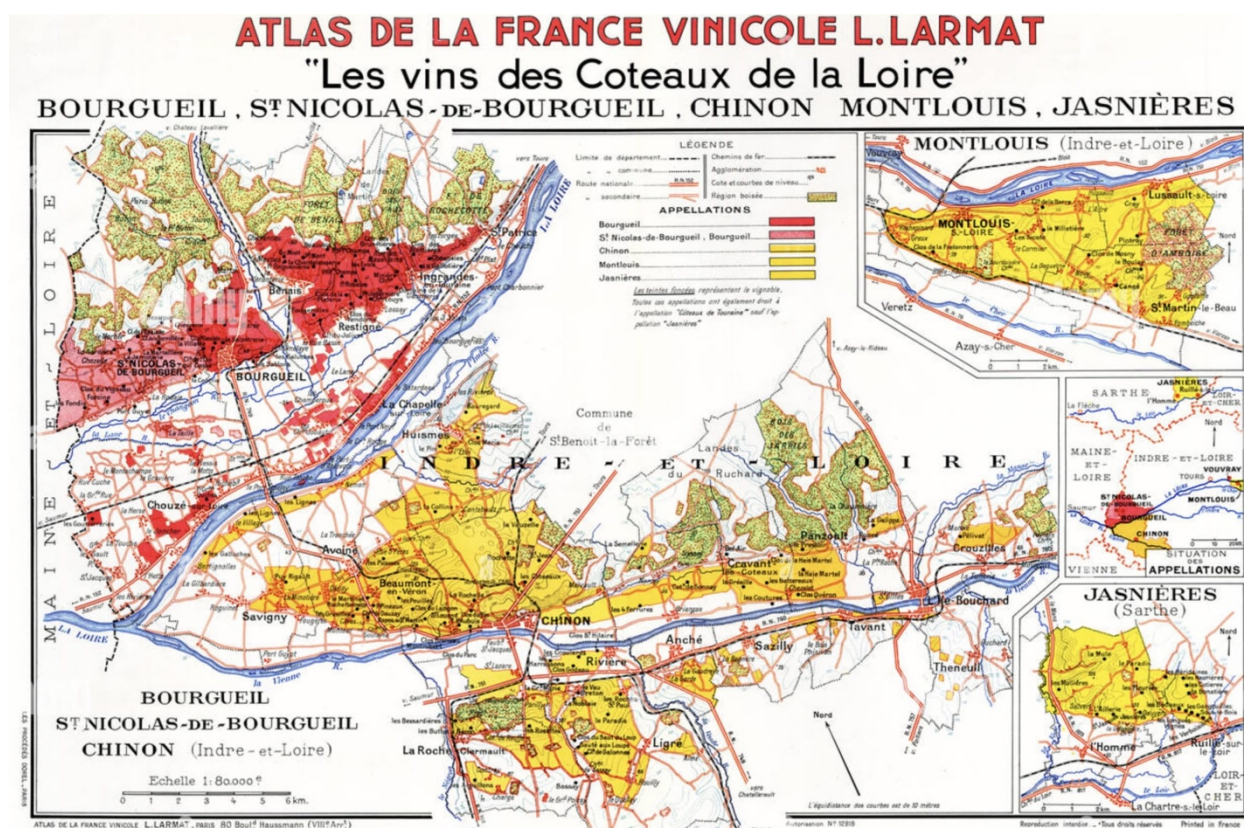
## FRANÇOIS DELAUNAY | BOURGUEIL + CHINON

### PURE OLD GUARD

(AVAILABLE IN ALL U.S. MARKETS FROM THE SOURCE)



François Delaunay's Bourgueil and Chinon wines, bottled at Domaine de la Lande, are compelling examples of terroir-focused, gimmick-free organic and biodynamic Loire Valley Cabernet Franc. The entire range maintains spectacular prices and simply overdelivers with an extremely classic sensibility. Full of flavor, they rewind the clock to my first encounters with Cabernet Franc, which, almost thirty years ago, was an esoteric variety in the States thought best blended rather than as a monologue performer.



Without a classification system in place, the location of a grower's vineyards is an important variable. The pedigree of each vineyard bearing this same appellation name can be quite different from the next. There are wines for easy drinking and others far more serious.



Bourgueil is split in two by the small creek, Le Changeon, and from a 20,000-foot view, along with the SNdB, the contiguous slope is like the Côte d'Or and many Champagne areas, only facing south and southwest. Many of Burgundy and Champagne's top spots favor more eastern expositions. Given its natural abundance of pyrazines when not yet ripe, Cabernet Franc historically required more late-afternoon sun, therefore a more southern or southwest exposition. These days, it ripens quite easily regardless.

The lower slopes of Bourgueil and SNdB are generally sandier, and those closest to the riverbank have more unsorted alluvial sand, silt, clay, and gravel. About 4km north of the Loire River toward the forest, a gentle uptick begins at 40 meters and peaks around 90. The top sites for wines of pedigree sit higher on the slope, close to the forests, and where roots make contact with more of the tuffeau limestone bedrock and calcareous clay. François' family vines begin just north of the village on the western end of Bourgueil at about 50 meters with more clay than sand and move upslope with the oldest vines destined for their "Prestige" bottling.

In short, François' Bourgueil wines come from six hectares planted between 1965 and 2010 at 50-60 meters facing south on a gentle hill of tuffeau limestone bedrock with a shallow siliceous clay topsoil, with some calcareous material from the underlying bedrock. This is the easier-going wine, fresh, beautiful, and lifted with a substantial follow-through. It's a great wine that will improve your day when looking for a fair-priced, terroir-laced organic wine that doesn't make you work too hard to find its cultural and regional stamp.

Over three days, I revisited their 2023 Saint Nicolas-de-Bourgueil, the Bourgueil 'Domaine', Bourgueil 'Gravieres', and Chinon. All were rock solid, but we decided to leave the Saint Nicolas-de-Bourgueil for another time, which didn't stand out in the context of this particular set of four.



*Upper slopes with clay and rock topsoil on tuffeau bedrock*



The **2023 CHINON** is easily the most charming in the bunch. More red fruit than Bourgueil, it was strong from the first day to the third and remained perfectly in place, which makes it solid for any by-the-glass program in restaurants, or when at home and need a bottle that delivers all week, a glass at a time. Like the other two wines, it doesn't miss a beat, except that it continues to unfold over the days.

It's a tough call between the **2023 BOURGUEIL 'DOMAINE'** and **2023 BOURGUEIL 'GRAVIERS'** bottlings, but the former is more structured than both the Chinon and Graviers. This wine, not unlike the others, is quite a wine at a price that's beyond fair. Grown all over the slope but mostly on clay topsoil with closer contact to the tuffeau limestone bedrock below, I find it to be the strongest contender of the three for those in search of deepest complexity and a longer conversation. While the other two wines are easier to gulp down, the 'Domaine' Bourgueil seems to be the most capable of not only complementing but also standing strong with richly flavored smoky grilled foods—though this is splitting hairs, as they all would perform exceptionally well.

While in New York in the middle of June, Remy (our New York and National Sales Manager) and I put the two Bourgueil wines in the wine bag to see how they'd show after a month off the boat. Firing on all cylinders straight away, they held that momentum all day. The quality was immediately recognized and the wines snapped up by a few sommelier drinking holes and one of Brooklyn's finest retailers. Everyone commented on how fair the pricing was. Grown more on gravel soils lower on the slope, 'Gravieres' may win over more people than the 'Domaine' bottling because it's a touch sleeker and maybe a touch more lifted in aroma.



*Remy with Jean Delaunay, the now retired winegrower of some of the finest old Loire Valley Cabernet Francs of my life. December 2024.  
That 1964 was 60 years young.*

All are made in a very straightforward manner without any cellar techniques distracting from the quality of the material. They're fully destemmed and fermented/macerated for around two to three weeks with one punch-down and one daily pump-over. Then they're aged 18 months in old 5000 L French oak foudre and steel, with light filtration but no fining.

What's wonderful about having these three wines on the table at once is that, just like when tasting with him at the cellar, it's easy to understand the care François takes for even his starter range of reds. These are nearly unbeatable organic wines for the price, with their expression of terroir fully intact.