



Robert Parker's
Wine Advocate

Closing Date: 6-29-07
Issue 171

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

BURGUNDY 2005:

The Dark Beauties of a Luminous Vintage - Part 2

by David Schildknecht

ALEX GAMBAL (BEAUNE)

2005 BOURGOGNE CUVÉE LES DEUX PAPIS	(\$25.00)	RED	87+?
2005 SAVIGNY-LES-BEAUNE	(\$30.00)	RED	89
2005 VOLNAY SANTENOTS VIEILLES VIGNES	(\$50.00)	RED	(90-91)
2005 VOSNE-ROMANÉE VIEILLES VIGNES	(\$50.00)	RED	(91-92)
2005 CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY	(\$45.00)	RED	90
2005 CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY LES CHARMES	(\$85.00)	RED	(91-92)
2005 CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY LES AMOUREUSES	(\$135.00)	RED	(89-90+?)
2005 ECHEZEAUX	(\$110.00)	RED	93
2005 CLOS VOUGEOT	(\$125.00)	RED	(91-92)

In the interest of full disclosure as well as history, I should note that Alex Gambal was a retail customer of mine during his days in Washington, DC real estate (probably amassing the proverbial large fortune prerequisite to making a small fortune in the wine business). I met him again when he was honing his French in the employ of Becky Wasserman, just before he entered the Lycée Viticole in Beaune at the improbable age of thirty-nine. It has been almost a decade now since Gambal began his négociant business. With a sophisticated, huge, gravity-fed, and historically-housed facility, increasingly high-quality and long-term grape contracts, gradual accumulation of his own vine acreage, and clearly adept assistance from winemaker Fabrice Laronze, Gambal is demonstrating impressive results with his 4,000-5,000 cases annually of both red and (60%) white. Several of his 2005 vintage reds had only just been bottled when I tasted. The others had been racked and assembled in tank for early two months, awaiting imminent bottling.

From his own several parcels in Volnay, Gambal's **2005 Bourgogne Cuvée les Deux Papis** gets its name not from old vines (they range from 20-45 years) but from the nickname he and a friend had as the "old farts" in their class at viticultural school. With tart rhubarb and back berry fruit and subtle mineral shadings, this displays impressively refined tannins for its generic appellation and considering that it has been in bottle for only a week and is showing obvious signs of bottle shock in its finish. From immediately east of the village itself, Gambal's **2006 Savigny-les-Beaune** offers aromas of tart strawberry and rhubarb, smoked meat, and pungent spice. Persistently invigorating and juicy on the palate, it displays a positively silky texture and a finish of cut and clarity that belie its recent bottling. This lithe, refined wine is long on delicacy and primed for short-term enjoyment although, given that it is a Savigny and a 2005, one suspects if would still perform well if forced to spend 3-5 years in a cellar. The **2005 Volnay Santenots Vieilles Vignes**, smells fetchingly of deep, sweet, ripe black cherry, brown spices, aromatic woods (probably not oak – only two of five barrels were new), moss, and hints of cherry pit bitterness. On the palate, tart but ripe black fruit offers counterpoint to an incipient creaminess of texture. A concentrated finish successfully integrates fresh fruit brightness and tart, bitter elements for a most invigorating effect. This should respond well to 3-5 years of cellaring, although Gambal is at pains to forecast that with their high acidity and polyphenols most of these 2005s may shut down soon after bottling and for several years. Gambal's five barrels of **2005 Vosne Romanée Vieilles Vignes** (from the Vigneaux site, east of Suchots) represent his first opportunity to work in this celebrated commune, and he picked a great vintage in which to begin. Black fruits, brown spices, violets, musk, and forest floor aromas all stream from the glass. As with most of the wines in this group, tart black fruits and dark, woody, faintly bitter shadings dominate on the palate. Lovely ginger spice and mysterious woodsiness inform an equally dark finish, yet one that remains brightly

fresh in its black fruit intensity. Plan on revisiting this wine in 3 years and expect several more years of interesting evolution beyond that.

The Gambal **2005 Chambolle-Musigny** is from four tiny parcels in Fouchères and Derrière le Four, admirably situated between the village and Musigny. Carnal, smoky, high-toned cherry and floral aromatics prepare one for a juicy, velvety palate full of inner-mouth perfume and leading to a lip-smacking and invigorating bright fruit and mineral salt finish. This will be hard to resist, but should respond well to a few years in bottle (where, given its performance, it's hard to believe it has been for only a week). The **2005 Chambolle-Musigny Charmes** offers an inimitable, ingratiatingly sultry bouquet of flowers, *fraise des bois*, red currant, smoked meat and sea breeze. Carnal, salty, savory, soy-like flavors and fine inner-mouth floral perfume ally themselves with this Chambolle's ripe but faintly tart red fruits on a precociously silky palate, and the wine finishes with polish, penetrating and invigorating brightness, distinct chalkiness, and salinity. Lower-tone red meatiness emerges increasingly as this wine takes on air, but still it is among the most luminous, insistently red-fruited, and least *noir* Pinots of the vintage. It should prove well worthy of 5-7 years in the cellar. Surprisingly, given the quality, this came into Gambal's possession as (three barrels of) young wine, not as grapes. From the same grower as his Charmes, Gambal's lone barrel of **2005 Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses** exudes ripe strawberry, peony, raw meat and chalk dust. Tart berry notes and white pepper on the palate threaten to be overwhelmed by the flavors of new wood. Is this just a phase that the wine will work through, as Gambal (predictably) predicts? Certainly there is plenty of fruit and meat in the finish. I just can't taste enough of the wine for the wood right now.

Gambal has three barrels (one new) – from vines planted in 1945 in the prime, "du Dessus" sector – of **2005 Echézeaux**. Scents of candied raspberries and strawberries, horehound, and tar segue into a palate of intensely ripe berry fruit, raw meat, charred wood smokiness, and a glossy, glycerin-rich feel to help ameliorate its ample tannins. This rich, sultry (newly-bottled) wine preserves invigorating fresh fruit acids and possesses a firm, fine-grained structure, both typical of the vintage at its best. One can expect to wait a decade for this to fulfill its potential and justify its price. Three of five barrels of Gambal's **2005 Clos Vougeot** are from a parcel high up and against the wall of the Clos and Grands Echézeaux (and three of five are new, too). Roasted meat and blackberry aromas lead into a bright, slightly tart, undeniably concentrated mouthful of black fruits backed by persistent, charred meatiness, alkaline mineral notes, and a chewy load of tannins. There is no doubt of this wine's impressive depth and density, and probably a decade is needed to bring it into focus, so bear in mind that my scores reflect an estimation of the appeal it will hold immediately post-bottling. Numerous importers. EURL Alex Gambal, Beaune; fax 011-33-3-80-22-21-66