

Town & Country

TRAVEL

FALL 2006

Simple Pleasures

Scotland, France,
Amsterdam,
South America,
New England



€

95 CANADA
\$5.95





HAWAII'S MOST
LUXURIOUS RESORT.
FROM THE MOMENT YOU ARRIVE
IT'S ALL UP TO YOU.

Indulge in the luxury
of our heavenly suites
and villas.

THE *Fairmont*
KEA LANI
HAWAII

Places in the heart.

Call your travel agent
or 1 800 441 1414
www.fairmont.com

RESORTS IN CANADA, UNITED STATES,
BERMUDA, MEXICO, UNITED KINGDOM,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND MONACO

Contributors



"During the twenty-five years I have lived in France, I've visited its wine regions many times," says **WALTER WELLS**, who wrote "Burgundy for Wine Lovers" (page 53). "But the tour of prestigious cellars that oenophile Jean-Emmanuel Simond organized last fall was the ne plus ultra." Wells is an author of *Dangerous De-Liaisons*. He and his wife, Patricia, spend summers in Provence and winters in Paris.

MIKI DUISTERHOF experienced the ideal weekend getaway when she photographed "Falling for the Berkshires" (page 124). "The exquisite small hotels and the delicious food make the area such a great destination," she says. "It seemed as if I were transported back in time, to Edith Wharton's world." Duisterhof also shoots for *House Beautiful* and *Real Simple*. She recently completed a book of photography about architect Erich Rossiter.



"On the *Silver Shadow*, I felt that we were part of a seascape," says writer **GEORGE HOWE COLT** of his Silversea cruise on the Riviera ("Splendor at Sea," page 120). "We spent a lot of time looking for dolphins, scooping out passing boats, listening to the water splash against the hull and watching the Mediterranean slide by." Colt, the author of *The Big House*, lives in western Massachusetts.

"Amsterdam has the creative energy of eastern Berlin but with a historic center as picturesque as parts of Paris," says Germany-based writer **GISELA WILLIAMS KRAMER** ("New Amsterdam," page 106). "It offers worldly flair, and it's easy to navigate on foot." Kramer has been published in the *New York Times*, *Food & Wine* and *Elle*. A Connecticut native, she has lived in Europe for the past four years.



The managing editor of *T&C Travel* and *T&C Weddings* since 2003, **ELIZA SCOTT HARRIS** wrote "Falling for the Berkshires." "Lenox is the quintessential New England village," she says. "It has a distinguished history and a small-town ambiance. I loved exploring all the beautifully preserved estates." Previously, Harris was an editor at *Departures* and *Garden Design*. She lives in Rye, New York, with her husband and two sons.

London-based photographer **JAMES MERRELL** was amazed by the grandeur of Scotland's Skibo Castle, the former residence of Andrew Carnegie ("Haven in the Highlands," page 78). "The sheer size of the estate and the loveliness of the grounds were very impressive," he says. A contributor to *W, House & Garden* and *Elle*, Merrell recently collaborated on *Off Duty*, a book of recipes from such top chefs as Nigella Lawson and Jamie Oliver.



For this issue, photographer **JOHN HUBA** explored the Dutch capital by bicycle ("New Amsterdam"). It was, he says, "the best way to see the city and to get a sense of everything. There are so many charming little nooks and side streets to discover. I felt like a local after just a week. The people there were both inquisitive and kind." Huba, a New York City resident, also shoots for *Vanity Fair* and *Men's Journal*.

Great Tastes

Burgundy for Wine Lovers

Savoring voluptuous Pinot Noirs in the
French region of Côte de Nuits. **by Walter Wells**



The vineyards of
Pernand-Vergelesse,
near Beaune.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEXANDRE BAILHACHE

FALL 2006 53

Great Tastes

If that's the appellation, what's the vintage?" The challenge was good-natured, yes, but a gauntlet had been thrown and lay there on the pebbly floor amid the oak barrels at Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier. The wine lover who had known that the glasses held Les Amoureuses accepted the challenge. Knowingly, he said, "1997." The rewards for the triumphant answer were both reinforced confidence and the admiration of his companions.

It was another of the taste-offs that marked the proud banter of our three-day tour of Burgundy last November. Organized for Eli Zabar, the entrepreneur known for his Manhattan food emporiums (and for his restless energy), the adventure could be thought of as a busman's holiday, the kind that makes us all wish we were busmen.

This was the third year that Eli had arranged for a series of private tastings with a small group of friends, including me. Jean-Emmanuel Simond, a Frenchman with a passion for wine, has set up the tours through his Paris-based company, Oenotropie. Jes, as friends call him, has a remarkable palate for someone so young (thirty-five); it was he who identified the appellation and the vintage at Mugnier. Other participants were Johanne Killeen, chef-owner (with her husband, George Germon) of Al Forno, the celebrated restaurant in

Visitors sampling
wine at Domaine
Jacques-Frédéric
Mugnier.

Providence, and Simon Frances, whose galleries in London and New York are known for rare tapestries and the kinds of carpets that Aubusson once produced for princes.

As such tours should, ours started with a great meal, on Sunday night, at the small and exclusive L'Hôtel de Beaune, in the elegant city of Beaune. The hotel has no kitchen, but the owner, Johan Bjorklund, prepared our dinner—veal chops and fresh cèpe mushrooms—on a big grill in the courtyard.

Our daily routine was purposeful. Each morning began with a brisk walk around town to shake off any cobwebs that the wine might have left strung across our brains. No one was tardy for the first cellar visit, at 9:30.

Burgundy is a tiny region, and we were in the part of it known as the Côte de Nuits, whose hallmark is voluptuous reds. The wine production in all of Burgundy is vastly smaller than that in Bordeaux; the result is a high-end product whose pricing can make you think of the jewelry merchants on the Place Vendôme.

You'll see some vineyards if you speed through the region on



Great Tastes



The cellar at
Domaine des
Comtes Lafon.
Below, from left:
Alix, Hubert
and Christiane
de Montille.

the expressway, but you will miss the soft beauty of the countryside. On our November mornings, the vineyards faded into the fog, which lay like a patina on the stone walls. Bronzed Virginia creeper clung to ancient buildings.

Burgundy's cellars may be grand (Leroy and Leflaive) or simple (Lafarge and Dujac), but all are traditional and authentic. And invariably, the winemakers give the impression of acquired wisdom—or in the case of Jeremy Seysses, at Dujac, both smarts and youthful vitality (he had just turned thirty). Eli cited his age as a point of reassurance. With Jeremy, Eli said, you get "all the tradition he represents and the potential he offers." Plus, Eli added, "he has a smart-ass charm that I especially like."

At Dujac and the other vineyards we visited, a tasting is communion, and so there is ceremony: the winemaker takes the big stopper out of the cask and inserts a glass tube, or "wine thief." Once it is filled, he places his thumb over the hole at the top to trap the wine so that he can distribute a small amount, usually about three mouthfuls, into each of the glasses that are happily pressed toward him.

As the wine falls into the glasses, there's a lot of swirling and sniffing, as well as comments on the color, the nose and the visual texture. And then the sip, and the noisy gurgles as the wine is "chewed." And then the spit: ideally a long and graceful arc that lands squarely in the *crachoir*. The rule is

not to swallow, as tastings require concentration and, therefore, sobriety. Besides, there is nothing to be learned about the taste and aroma by swallowing.

As he proceeds, the winemaker describes the vineyard's size, its output and the composition of its soil. *Terroir* (sense of place) is everything in Burgundy, particularly if defined inclusively: the soil and substrata, the microclimate and the winemaker, too. Indeed, the complex flavors of the Pinot Noir change with each property, sometimes even from row to row. They certainly alter with the winemaker. As Jes put it, "The key is to understand the producer's choices. This is why Burgundy can be the most frustrating wine—or the most enchanting one. When you don't know the producer or comprehend

how he works, you have absolutely no idea of what a specific wine will taste like, regardless of its vintage."

Easy? No, said Jes, "it takes a lifetime."

As it was November, the attention-sapping early phases of winemaking were over. Importers had come to hear about the exciting 2005 wines and to taste the 2004s. The mood was relaxed and confident, even joyous. Restaurants were full, and order books were filling.

Two thousand four is an uneven vintage, but a surprisingly good one considering that the growing season dumped some big problems on Burgundy. Sunshine and warmth were scant in June and July. In August, ruinous hail pummeled much of the region. But then there was a miracle: September was hot and sunny, and the vintage finished *en beauté*. The winemakers were happy.

**"BURGUNDY'S
CELLARS MAY BE
GRAND (LEROY
AND LEFLAIVE)
OR SIMPLE (LAFARGE
AND DUJAC),
BUT ALL ARE
TRADITIONAL AND
AUTHENTIC."**



The mood at the family table of Hubert and Christiane de Montille, at their home in Volnay, was especially festive. An invitation to dine with the winemaker is exceptional, and we accepted the Montilles' with eagerness.

Hubert de Montille is one of the true personages of Burgundy. His role in the cult wine film *Mondovino* revealed him as charming, witty and provocative. Now seventy-eight, he has turned the winemaking over to his son, Etienne, but hasn't given up his strong opinions. When asked to compare his wines with his son's, for example, he quoted what he had told Etienne: "You are gifted for little vintages, and I am gifted for the big ones."



Great Tastes

For the Montilles, wine is a family matter. Besides Etienne being responsible for the Domaine de Montille labels, his sister, Alix (also a *Mondovino* star), produces wines under the Deux Montilles label.

Of all our experiences at the wineries we visited, the rarest was at Domaine Leroy. The cellar there is a place of reverence, and the proprietor, Lalou Bize-Leroy, is arguably one of the world's best winemakers and unquestionably one of the most controversial. The descriptor that recurs in any conversation about her is "perfectionist." At eighty, she has earned a right she has always demanded: quite simply, the right to be demanding. Some of her wines sell for between \$400 and \$500 retail, a fact that somehow came to mind when I looked at the spit bucket.

There is no glitz about her cellar, but there is striking attention to detail. In the whitewashed fermentation room, the oak vats are matte black. The paint used doesn't affect nose or palate but does hide the inevitable juice stains. To absorb excess humidity, thick, cream-colored woolen mats swaddle the floor. It was heaven above an ecru cloud.

Back in the car after each tasting, we were silent at first, then burst into conversation, smart, expansive and confident. For Johanne, tasting with the winemakers brought a new understanding of the individuality of each vineyard. For Eli, the trip was another chapter in a major life passion that will soon directly benefit patrons of Taste, his restaurant on Manhattan's

Christophe Roumier carries on the family tradition at their winery in Chambolle-Musigny.



Upper East Side. For Simon, it was a chance to refine his collection. For Jes, the trip was accompanied by news of acceptance to the prestigious Master of Wine program (administered by the Institute of Masters of Wine, of England).

And for me, it was great to pretend to be a busman and to enjoy the ride. ❖

BURGUNDY BASICS

Telephone and fax numbers listed below, when dialed from the United States, should be preceded by 011-33, unless otherwise noted.

Where to Stay

Beaune is a convenient location for a visit to Burgundy. L'Hôtel de Beaune is one of its best hotels, along with Le Cep, which is older and more established.

Le Cep

Double rooms from \$193.
27 Rue Maufoux, Beaune; 3-80-22-35-48; fax: 3-80-22-76-80;
hotel-cep-beaune.com.

L'Hôtel de Beaune

Double rooms from \$310.
5 Rue Samuel Legay, Beaune;
3-80-25-94-14; fax: 3-80-25-94-13;
lhoteldebeaune.com.

Where to Eat

Two restaurants in Beaune have a *Michelin* star: Le Bénaton and Le Jardin des Remparts.

Le Bénaton

25 Faubourg Bretonnière, Beaune;
3-80-22-00-26.

Le Jardin des Remparts

10 Rue de L'Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune;
3-80-24-79-41.

Tours

Through *Oenotropie*, Jean-Emmanuel Simond designs customized wine tours for small groups. Rates start at \$1,670 a person for three days.
6-18-44-47-32; oenotropie.com.

French Wine Explorers, a small American company run by two sommeliers, offers tours that enjoy a good reputation. 877-261-1500; wine-tours-france.com.

Wineries

The finest Burgundy cellars are a very tough ticket, and money alone won't necessarily gain you entrée. Our tour would not have been possible without Jes, who has achieved insider status by cultivating his contacts over many years. The top *négociant* (merchant) houses, like Bouchard Père & Fils and Louis Jadot, are more accessible, and they make excellent wines.

Bouchard Père & Fils

Château de Beaune, Beaune; 3-80-248-024; bouchard-pereetfils.com.

Domaine des Comtes Lafon

Clos de La Barre, Meursault;
3-80-21-22-17; comtes-lafon.fr.

Domaine Dujac

7 Rue de la Bussière, Morey Saint Denis; 3-80-34-01-00; dujac.com.

Domaine Georges Roumier

Rue de Vergy, Chambolle-Musigny;
3-80-62-86-37.

Domaine Hubert de Montille

Rue Pied de la Vallée, Volnay;
3-80-21-62-67.

Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Château de Chambolle-Musigny, Chambolle-Musigny;
3-80-62-85-39; mugnier.fr.
Domaine Leflaive
Place des Marronniers,
Puligny-Montrachet; 3-80-21-30-13; leflaive.fr.

Domaine Leroy

Rue du Pont Boillot, Meursault;
3-80-21-21-10; domaineleroy.com.

Domaine Michel Lafarge

Rue de La Combe, Volnay; 3-80-21-61-61.

Maison Louis Jadot

21 Rue Eugène Spuller, Beaune; 3-80-22-10-57; louisjadot.com. ~W.W.