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Decanter

BURGUNDY 2016

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Vintage preview

Burgundy 2016

Devastating frost made its mark on this vintage, slashing yields and resulting in uneven quality. But the best examples are still worth buying, says William Kelley, especially premiers and grands crus reds, and value wines from Côte Chalonnaise

ALONG THE COTE d'Or, no one could recall anything like it. Burgundy is no stranger to frost, but the night of 26-27 April was unique, striking not just the low-lying regional and village appellations, but many celebrated grands and premiers crus upslope. Vineyards that normally escape unscathed were razed.

'I've never heard of Echezeaux freezing,' reflected Emmanuel Rouget. 'My uncle Henri Mayer said that even Richebourg froze in the winter of 1947, but never Echezeaux.' Christophe Roumier, whose vineyards in Chambolle-Musigny were hit hard, agreed: 'It's certainly unprecedented in my career.'

The caprice of the April frosts, denuding some vineyards of grapes while leaving others untouched, has left an indelible mark on the 2016 wines, resulting in almost unexampled heterogeneity. Generalising about a vintage is always a challenge, but in 2016 it is close to impossible. This year, more than ever, the devil is in the detail.

Before 27 April, the Côte d'Or was looking forward to a copious crop; indeed, many growers in Morey-St-Denis, which escaped the freeze, reported their largest harvest since 1999. Consequently, distinctions were stark between frosted parcels, cropped at often punishingly low yields, and the generous production of vines that survived unscathed. ➤

'Generalising about a vintage is always a challenge, but in 2016 it is close to impossible'

Photograph: Mike Prior. With thanks to Hedonism Wines (www.hedonism.co.uk), The Wine Society (www.thewinesociety.com) and Hatch Mansfield (www.hatchmansfield.com) for the loan of the bottles



Kelley's pick of 2016

The 2016s are bottled in January 2018, hence prices and alcohols are not yet set. Contact specialist merchants for allocations or to enquire about their en primeur tastings.

The following 101 recommendations are a selection of top-scoring and great-value wines from more than 1,000 barrel samples tasted in October and November 2017. Access all the full notes and scores from Decanter.com/premium

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Chablis

Domaine François Raveneau, Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru 94

Superb, bursting from the glass with complex apple blossom, tangerine, confit citrus, peach and intriguing mint. On the palate, the wine is intensely concentrated, stony and complete, with first-class cut and grip through the long, flavourful finish. **Drink** 2022-2035

Domaine Louis Michel, Séchet 1er Cru 93

Fabulously complex citrus pith, grapefruit and mint aromas. On the palate, the wine's glossy attack is followed by a briny, stony note with real mineral grip and a lovely juicy core. A standout in the range this year. **Drink** 2019-2027

William Fèvre, Les Clos Grand Cru 93

Excellent this year, opening to a complex nose of orange blossom and orange zest, confit citrus and spice. Textural, full-bodied and complete, with a deep core, lovely minerality and impressive dimension. **Drink** 2019-2027

Eleni & Edouard Vorcoret, Butteaux 1er Cru 91

An impressive achievement in 2016. Notes of citrus peel, white peach, honeysuckle and wheat toast. Taut on the lengthy palate, mineral and focused, with good energy and depth. **Drink** 2019-2025

Patrick Pluze, Coteau de Fontenay 91

Very classic, transcending the vintage's vagaries. Aromas of citrus zest, oyster shell and white flowers introduce a cool, glossy palate with a lovely line of acidity, good depth and serious grip on the finish. **Drink** 2018-2028

Louis Jadot, Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru 90

Quite serious, with a classic bouquet of wet stones, lemon zest and spring flowers, and a taut, stony, medium-full palate with nice cut and grip. **Drink** 2019-2028 ➤