

CLASSIC AND LESS WELL-KNOWN WINES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MATURITY

## Angerhof Tschida Prädikat wines

by Stephan Reinhardt

If somebody mentions sweet wines from Austria, you probably think of Kracher first. And most likely, if somebody says Illmitz, you will again be hard pressed to think of anybody other than Kracher (see *WFW* 23, pp.58–59). But this is only one reason for introducing Hans and Rita Tschida, a couple in their late 50s producing sweet and red wines at the family owned Angerhof in Illmitz by the Neusiedlersee. The other, more important reason is that, like Kracher, Tschida also produces world-class sweet wines every year across the whole range of Prädikat wines—not only Trockenbeereauslese (TBA) but also Spätlese and Auslese, Beereauslese, Eiswein, and Schilfwein (a kind of straw wine made from overripe grapes with a must weight of at least 25° KMW/127° Oechsle, which are dried not on straw but reeds until they reach the necessary must weight by dehydration). These wines are different in style to Kracher's rich, noble, and elegant TBAs but are certainly no less great. And without doubt Tschida surpasses Kracher at the lower Prädikat levels such as Spätlese and Auslese. Probably there is no better sweet wine in all Austria (or even Germany) for the money than Tschida's Spätlesen, which cost no more than €5.50 a bottle.

Hans Tschida started producing wine after his father's unexpected early death in 1983. As Alois Kracher did at the same time, Hans Tschida decided to focus on sweet wines. "In terms of wine, we are living in paradise here. The lake, our soils, the climate, our vines... It all amounts to a gift, if not a duty, to make great sweet wines," Tschida says. Today the Angerhof cultivates 18ha (44 acres). Some 70 percent of production is white wine, all of it sweet, all grown on the sandy soils of Illmitz very close to Lake Neusiedl and its countless lagoons.

Like Podersdorf and Apetlon, Illmitz is part of the so-called Seewinkel—a classic *Botrytis cinerea* area where misty mornings are followed by gloriously sunny, windy days that "in eight out of ten years," says Tschida, result in perfect noble rot.

Tschida also produces straw wines that are made from healthy, unbotrytized grapes that have been picked mostly at the beginning of October with a very high level of maturity and then dehydrated on reed mats for at least two months before being pressed. "The effect of concentration by dehydration is the same, as botrytis also takes away water," says Tschida. "But making straw wine is less risky, especially with more thick-skinned grapes such as Muscat Ottonel and Traminer, which do not succumb to botrytis as easily as Welschriesling, Sämling (Scheurebe), Chardonnay, or even Sauvignon Blanc. And, of course, straw wine gives exceptional clarity and purity in a sweet wine, because there is no noble rot to distort the natural flavor of the grape variety."

In stylistic terms, Tschida's focus on the grape's natural fruit expression is one of the things that distinguishes his wines from Kracher's. Tschida's sweet wines are more classic than those of Kracher. They are less opulent, maybe less full-bodied and complex, for Tschida prefers a brighter, more reductive, extremely precise and fruit-driven style that is perfectly balanced by a characteristic and appetizing Säurespiel (cat-and-mouse game of sugar and acidity), resulting in wines of incomparable accuracy of fruit expression, elegance, and finesse. The brilliant, often tropical, fruit aromas of a Tschida sweet wine arise from a succulent texture, but the marked acidity gives a less powerful, less rich sensation on the palate than Kracher's TBAs. Although Tschida's sweet wines are also very concentrated, they have a floating, weightless quality—even wines that contain up to 320g of residual sugar per liter and have been aged in new barriques for 24 months. But like Kracher, Tschida is not out to break any world records in terms of sugar concentration, for at least one

reason: "I just want to control everything," he says, "notably the fermentation. You cannot do that if the sugar levels are too high." Tschida thinks he gets the best TBAs with a must weight of 33–36° KMW.

Concluding the comparison, we might say that if Kracher's TBAs are made for adoring and storing, Tschida's Angerhof TBAs and straw wines are made for drinking. (Of course, you could store them as well, but this would seem to be a heroic renunciation.)

To arrive at the most perfect fruit character, Tschida does a huge amount of work in the vineyard, where all of the raisined grapes are protected from starlings by tightly woven black nets. In the cellar he prefers a completely controlled, reductive, very gentle vinification, with a cool fermentation in stainless-steel tanks of various sizes. Only very high concentrated wines are aged for up to 24 months in barriques, all of them new. Before bottling, there is only one filtration.

There are two further remarkable facts. Tschida can offer at least 3,000 half-bottles of even his very best sweet wine. And no wine costs more than €40, which by comparison with other world-class sweet wines is incredibly cheap. Tschida is honest and open enough to explain the reason: "First of all, it is very easy for us to get noble rot. We can hardly avoid it. Second, the area is completely flat. We don't have steep terraces like the Mosel Valley, so the picking is much easier and much less expensive. As far as I know, no other area in the world can so easily produce such a broad range of excellent sweet wines. So I consider it our duty not only to produce noble sweet wines but also to sell them at fair prices."

Finally, one should not forget Tschida's classic dry red wines, made from vines up to 60 years old, grown on gravel, and mainly from Zweigelt. With their ripe yet fresh fruit and robust tannins, they taste more like classic Clarets than the full-bodied, modern, sweet, oak-and-chocolate monsters that are typical nowadays. They are perfect with food, even if they may not win gold medals.

**2007 Cuvée Spätlese**

(A blend of Sämpling, Muskat Ottonel, and Welschriesling, 10% ABV) Fresh, quite cool citrus-fruit aromas and a fine layer of botrytis. On the palate, svelte, crisp, with a nervous tension and slightly salty tang. Nicely balanced, and a delicious wine with food. Drink to 2012. **16**

**2007 Cuvée Auslese**

(A blend of Welschriesling, Sämpling, Muskat Ottonel, 10% ABV) Fresh and tangy nose, with lime and hints of honey. Elegant and balanced palate, with a delicate interplay of sugar and acidity and a fresh grapefruit character. Good concentration and length. Drink to 2015. **17**

**2007 Muskat Ottonel Auslese**

(9% ABV) Bright floral and fruit aromas, followed by savory, typical Muscat flavors. Fleet-footed and sophisticated, it acts out a wonderful cat-and-mouse game of delicate acidity and sweetness. A perfect partner to Italian panettone. Drink to 2013. **16**

**2006 Chardonnay Beerenauslese**

(9.5% ABV) Very long yeast contact. Complex bouquet of tropical fruit such as pineapple, combined with gentle, yeasty-creamy layers and a delicate aroma of raisins. On the palate, lush and rich but tight. A complex and creamy BA showing a delicate acidity, a hint of toffee, and very good length. Drink to 2020. **18**

**2006 Muskat Ottonel Beerenauslese**

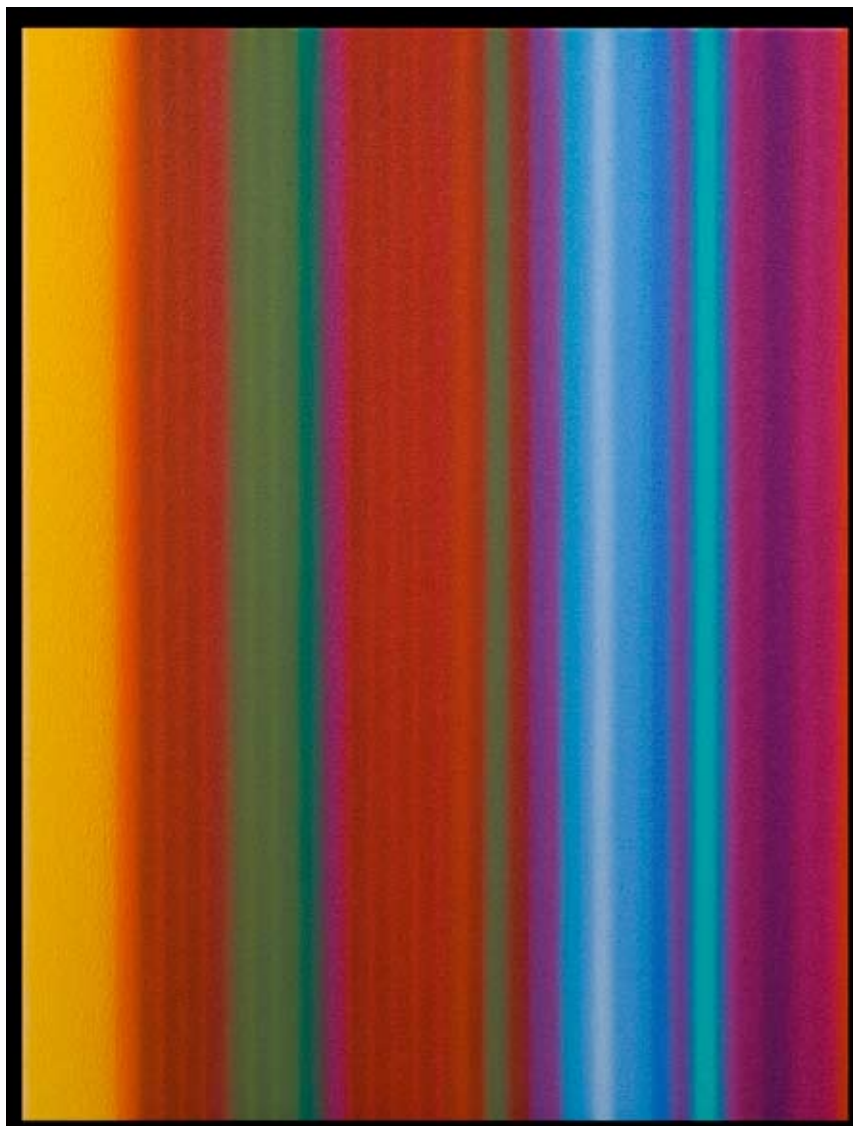
(10% ABV). Mellow, ripe, fruit-peel aromas and intense, very typical Muskat flavors. Oily-soft palate, more severe, savory, and weighty than the Chardonnay, but still very sweet and harmonious, with a discreet bitterness on the very long aftertaste. Drink to 2020. **17**

**2006 Sauvignon Blanc Beerenauslese**

(9% ABV) This is the quintessence of New World-style Sauvignon Blanc. Ripe gooseberries, a nice piquancy, with hints of honey. On the palate, balanced, compact, and elegant, with the purest Sauvignon fruit expression. Should become more complex with time in bottle. Drink to 2020. **17**

**2006 Sämling Trockenbeerenauslese**

(7% ABV) Sämpling is a synonym for Scheurebe and often delivers, in its sheer fruity explosiveness, the most spectacular wines Tschida has to offer. White-gold color with a greenish shimmer. The 2006 is a beautiful marriage of the richness and concentration of the 2005 vintage with the elegance and finesse of 2004. The bouquet is fresh, displaying aromas of limes, pineapples, and yeasty layers. Opulent but brilliant on the palate, with the finest fruit expression and an extremely elegant texture thanks to the amazing finesse of the acidity.



**Tim Bavington, *Come Around Again*** (2008); synthetic polymer on canvas, 24x18in (61x46cm)

Mindful that there are ample vine and wine images elsewhere, and keen to reinforce our view that wine is allied to the other arts, in this section we regularly feature the work of a contemporary artist.

Tim Bavington was born in England in 1966 and educated at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, and the University of Nevada. He now lives in Las Vegas. He has worked within the strict format of the vertical stripe for ten years. More recently he has turned his attention to music and the correlation between color and sound. Picture courtesy of Eleven Fine Art: [www.elevenfineart.com](http://www.elevenfineart.com); +44 20 7823 5540.

Still very sweet, this wine is perfectly balanced, showing endless length and almost eternal pineapple. Needs a few years to show its real class. Drink 2016–40. **19**

**2005 Chardonnay Trockenbeerenauslese**

(10% ABV) Because botrytis came much earlier than usual in 2005, Tschida decided not to make any straw wine. This TBA is fresh and piquant, still with some hints of ivy/green wood but, above all, brilliant aromas of peaches, melons, pineapples, honey, and hazelnuts. Very elegant and bright on the palate, with precise fruit expression, finest acidity, and a very nice structure, this wine celebrates a fascinating freshness and race. Still very young. Drink 2010–25. **19**

**2004 Sämling Trockenbeerenauslese**

(9% ABV) Golden. Bright tropical-fruit aromas—pineapples, limes, and grapefruit—still yeasty. Brilliant on the palate, with the finest possible expression of nobly rotten raisins, very rich and extremely elegant, showing a breathtaking accuracy of fruit and a somnambulist balance. Very long and appetizing. Drink 2010–25. **19**

**2004 Muskat Ottonel Schilfwein**

(10.5% ABV, 270g/l of residual sugar [RS]) Gorgeous Muscat expression on the nose, with exotic, up-front flavors of pineapples and gooseberries, very complex and profound. On the palate, this is shatteringly concentrated and complex, yet succulent

and voluptuous, spicy and extremely elegant thanks to an excellent acidity and grippy structure. Very long. Drink to 2020. **19**

**2004 Zweigelt Schilfwein**

(10% ABV) Because a red botrytis wine is not adaptable to Tschida's style, he concentrates the ripe berries by laying them side by side on reed mats, where the berries dehydrate over several weeks. The wine has been aged for 24 months in new barriques and has taken on the color of peonies in the glass. Some hints of new wood with aromas of red berries, red currant, pomegranate, and strawberry purée. This unusual but delicate and noble sweet wine is very elegant and silky, showing a jammy, strawberry fruit with an extremely fine acidity and structure. Very long. In some ways it seems like a sweet relative of Pinot Noir. Drink 2010–20. **18**

**2003 Zweigelt Schilfwein**

(9% ABV, 323g/l RS) Medium-red color, brightening to white toward the edge. Smoky nose with dark tobacco, black chocolate, and concentrated but delicate fruit aromas of ripe plums, cherries, and red currants. Very dense and sweet on the palate, with a profound, enamel texture of chocolate and nougat—toasty, but also fresh red berries and a beautiful acidity. Very rich but not in the least thick or Porty. Will need about ten years to develop. Drink 2015–40. **19**

**2003 Welschriesling/Weissburgunder Schilfwein**

(85% Welschriesling, 15% Pinot Blanc, 320g/l RS, 9% ABV) Amazing, multilayered, and bright on the nose, showing precise aromas of white peach, candied orange zest, and caramel, as well as a delicate perfume. Extremely elegant and fresh on the palate, despite being very rich and concentrated, this wine has an animated character, beautiful finesse and freshness, and some mineral notes. The complexity and richness of this fantastic wine show through fully only on the finish, together with some toasty aromas. Drink to 2040. **20**

**2002 Sämling Trockenbeerenauslese**

(290g/l RS, 10% ABV) Intense yellow to pale gold. This wine shows a concentration of fruit worthy of a Kracher TBA but was aged only in stainless steel. Very rich and succulent, with ripe tropical fruit flavors, grapefruit, very brilliant and accurate again, thanks to the delicate acidity, very elegant and long. Drink to 2035. **19**

**2001 Traminer Schilfwein**

(10.5% ABV) Luminous gold. Aromas of shortcrust and breaded yellow fruits, peaches in the background, with notes of toast and toffee. On the palate, complex and concentrated, again baked fruits, finest acidity, very elegant and long, spicy aftertaste. Very noble but also still very sweet. Drink to 2025. **19**

## Madeira 1850–1954

by Richard Mayson

I marvel at Patrick Grubb MW's annual Madeira tasting for two reasons. First, it takes place at Armoury House, with its historic rugby and cricket field besieged by the gaping modern office blocks of the City of London. Second, every year, Patrick generously uncorks history. No wine is more resilient than Madeira, and it is not uncommon to go back to the start of the 19th century or even earlier. All the wines invoke a sense of wonder or mystery.

With the exception of the Madeira Velhissimo MFV and Victoria Wine, all wines in the tasting were (at the time of tasting) available for purchase from Patrick's remarkable list.

**José Gomes Henriques Araújo Reverta**

**Prazeyres 1891 Sercial**

Mid-deep amber; fine, floral, expressive, high-toned aromas; caramelized, casky flavors, bone-dry, rustic, but quite powerful in style. The acidity is searing rather than steely and the finish rather coarse and woody. **15.5**

**Quinta da Bela Vista Carcavelos NV**

An oddball; from one of the last estates in this region close to Lisbon on the Portuguese mainland. This estate fell prey to property developers in 1969 and is now occupied by high-rise blocks named Torres Bela Vista. From a blend of vintages spanning the 1940s to 1960s. Amber/nut brown; perfumed, floral, some rancio; dry, akin to an old Amontillado, with a similar tang; still alive and quite rich, but not very distinguished. **13.5**

**Companhia Vinicola da Madeira 1850**

**Verdelho**

Mid-deep nut brown to amber; rich, singed autumnal aromas, rather lacking in definition; rich, rather soupy, caramelized flavors, with a slightly cheesy undertone; crisp acidity and a rather treacle-like finish. **15**

**HM Borges 1915 Solera Verdelho**

Mid-amber hue; rather stewed on the nose, touch of bonfire; fine, medium-rich, spicy flavors, quite sweet for Verdelho, lovely texture, and a rich, warming finish. **15.5**

**Leacock 1954 Bual**

Deep amber/mahogany; fine and expressive, high-toned, thick-cut marmalade aromas and flavors; fine richness of texture and weight, with a lovely tang on the finish. Good balance and depth. **17**

**Torre Bella Estate 1930 Boal**

Deep amber; powerful nose, high-toned,

floral, with just a hint of mothballs; fine, rich concentration of flavor, lime marmalade with citrus-like acidity, slightly burned on the finish but very fine nonetheless. **16.5**

**Barbeito 1895 Boal**

Mid-amber; unusual, dusty smell, redolent of dog biscuits, meaty but not terribly expressive; much fresher on the palate: lovely medium-rich quince marmalade flavors, with nutty-savory complexity, lovely length and purity, despite the strange nose. **16**

**Barbeito 1950 Malvazia**

Amber/mahogany; lovely rich raisins and dried figs on the nose; fine and concentrated, peppery, spicy and rich, quite spiritry but with fine, figgy length. **16.5**

**Cossart Gordon 1865 Solera Malvazia**

Amber center, olive-green rim; high-toned and varnished on the nose, hint of boiled sweets (which would be a fault in any other wine!) and a caramelized tang; wonderfully soft, rich, and figgy, with a powerful tang. Sweetness and acidity in near-perfect counterpoint. Fine but seemingly confected on the finish. **16**

**Barbeito Malvazia 1875**

Mid-deep amber; pungent, rich, and expressive; prune and fig, with a tawny marmalade tang, sweetness offset by fine, fresh, zesty acidity. Good balance and poise. Overall, very fine indeed. **18**

**Madeira Velhissimo MFV NV**

Usually at this tasting there is a mysterious bottle, without a vintage but with a distinguished pedigree evident from the taste alone. There was just such a wine this year: a single bottle (almost certainly the last in existence) of Madeira Velhissimo MFV. The initials are probably of a member of the Madeiran Vasconcelos family. The wine was amber-gold in color with a delicate, unusually pure, high-toned, honeyed aroma that sang straight from the glass. On the palate it was still beautifully fresh and pure, with flavors of dried apricots, honey, and a hint of beeswax. Lovely weight and texture indicating long cask age, yet incredibly clean and pure. Delicious, delicate, and very fine. **19**

**Victoria Wine NV**

Another single bottle without a vintage and probably from the same era, but this one proved to be a disappointment. Labeled Victoria Wine (presumably by the now-defunct wine merchants), it was imported to the UK in 1841 by March & Benson, bottled in 1843, transferred to demijohn in 1883, and rebottled in 1884. It appeared a pale green-tinted amber in the glass but reeked like an old wardrobe. Dry and delicate, with some richness of age, it was marred by a musty mothball character that overwhelmed it on the finish. A curiosity to which I did not give a mark. **NS**

# Domaine Joseph Voillot 1990–2006

by Neil Beckett

Burgundy lovers often exclaim, only half-jokingly, that growers in one village should not be allowed to make wines from another. But most would make an honorable exception of Domaine Joseph Voillot in Volnay, which, on the basis of six vintages of Pommard Rugiens and Volnay Champans (offered for tasting by UK agent Anthony Sarjeant and Goedhuis & Co in London), produces Pommards almost as elegant as its Volnays. The Rugiens may not conform to the false typicity of Pommard, seeming to borrow some of Volnay's silken trappings, but few, surely, will regret it.

On the basis of this tasting, Domaine Joseph Voillot is an underappreciated source of fine Burgundy—a reminder that small producers who stick to the knitting, or rather plowing, can remain off the radars of even the most attentive devotees. Five generations of the family have tended the vines. Most of the 10ha (25-acre) domaine is divided between Volnay and Pommard, and while Champans and Rugiens may be the top wines, it also produces Pommard premiers crus Epenots, Micault, and Pézerolles, and Volnay premiers crus Brouillards, Caillerets, and Fremiets.

Some of the vines are held under a *métayage* arrangement—in the case of Champans ever since Marius Voillot sharecropped in 1933. He passed the estate on to his son Joseph in 1953, and it is now run by his son-in-law Jean-Pierre Charlot, who has continued the *lutte raisonnée* and regular plowing.

After rigorous selection in vineyard and winery, the grapes are destemmed. The fermentation, with indigenous yeasts, takes place in temperature-controlled vats, where the cap is broken twice a day by foot, the *cuvaison* lasting 12–14 days. The wines are matured for 14–16 months in barriques, only 15–20 percent new, before being bottled by gravity. They are never fined and are filtered only when necessary.

## 2006 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

Medium ruby red, limpid, natural luster. Restrained on the nose, but painfully shy rather than sullen. A bonbon character without being too confected; dried roses and violets, no overt fruitiness but a ripeness and sweetness (that may be derived partly from Brett, though this is not too intrusive). Silken entry, appetizing, brightly fruited, well-integrated acidity, crisply ripe, good intensity and vivacity; a lovely unforced quality and harmonious finish of good length. Very good for its age and vintage. **15.5**

## 2005 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

Medium ruby, a denser and more intense color than the '06. More expressive on the nose, too, but with a definite family resemblance: the same authenticity and faint rusticity. Cherry and damson, but neither overtly fruity nor lacking in purity. Richer silken texture, with more abundant but ripe and very well-extracted tannins. The same lively acidity, lending clarity and refinement to match the richness; controlled energy, impressive intensity. Harmonious finish of good length if still to fan out. **17**

## 2003 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

Only a shade lighter than the '05. The most expressive of these first three, not surprisingly, but still a very recognizable scent, here with a dry warmth and faint nuttiness as well as the sweet earth; faintly exotic but far from overblown. Looser, softer, more voluminous, still with fresh, seemingly natural acidity, which retains some elegance and freshness, so that this betrays little of the heat of the vintage. It lacks a little of the focused energy and purity of the '05 and is warmer on the finish, but nevertheless it is a good interpretation of the year (when the harvest started four weeks early). Still very Volnay. **16**

## 1999 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

Lustrous medium ruby, a beautiful core color, even gradation toward the rim, holding well. An intense, powerful nose—blackstrap and licorice, as well as earth and violets—really starting to open up at ten years old. A rich but less supple and flowing texture, with more dryness and rub to the tannins. An animating acidity still, but slightly sluggish and solid, with less follow-through on the finish. The stamp of the vintage, as well as the trappings of the village. **15**

## 1995 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

The light, limpid, pale ruby and rather tawny rim arouse suspicions, confirmed on the nose and palate, that this is a less-than-perfect bottle—old before its time and probably unrepresentative. **NS**

## 1990 Volnay Premier Cru Champans

Lovely pale ruby. A beautiful, gentle, natural perfume: exquisite, expressive, completely clean but of the earth, in full bloom but far from overblown, still remarkably fresh. Satin-

smooth, expansive but still sufficiently supportive, racy and still vibrant for all its caressing refinement. Perfectly harmonious on the finish; good, perfumed length. The epitome of Volnay, still going strong (unlike many 1990s) and still time to go. **17.5**

## 2006 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

Very pale, even gradation, rosé toward the rim. Attractive, clean, and ripe, an amalgam of black and red fruit, a whiff of red licorice, notably delicate and elegant for Pommard. Brightly fruited, round and smooth, with an elegant, refined tannin. Adequate clarity and intensity of fruit, lacking only a little core density and direction on the mid-palate. Crisp finish, with a faintly bitter edge. **15**

## 2005 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

Medium ruby, dullish luster, violet rim. A little inexpressive but balanced, clean, sweet fruit, licorice and violets, greater depth and intensity than the '06. Greater immediacy and vibrancy on the palate, harmonious, rich, and smooth. Brilliant clarity of flavor and a well defined finish of good length. Better than any of the Pommard premiers crus at a large tasting of 2005s (*WFW* 22, pp.172–73). **17**

## 2003 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

A shade deeper than the '05. Warm but rather ill-defined nose, earthy and ripe, with a rugged, rustic appeal. Rich and weighty, more abundant but still smooth tannin. Balanced and fresh enough but lacks a little energy on the mid-palate; a shade dry on the finish. **14**

## 1999 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

Medium ruby, holding its color well. Appealing, ripe, sweet strawberry fruit, exotic and seductive on the nose. Equally rich and ripe on the palate but not at all clinging, still cut by fresh acidity and supported by smooth tannins. Good clarity, intensity, and grip. An excellent Pommard, an excellent '99, still with several years to go. **17**

## 1995 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

Medium ruby with the first signs of tawny on the rim. Clean but deep, earthy, exotic, the last vestiges of summer fruit turning to fall. Balanced acidity and rich, refined tannins. It lacks a little of the clarity and elegance that distinguishes the best of these but compensates with a mature, gamey, savory richness. For marinated hare. **15.5**

## 1990 Pommard Premier Cru Rugiens

A beautiful color and very impressive depth; bright, intense, holding well. Clean and composed, but also exotic and somehow risqué to smell, deeply mysterious in its roseate intrigue. A gorgeous mouthful: balanced and clean, expansive but fresh, rich but vibrant; great energy and harmony, saturation and sustain, still with gentle grip on the end finish. Outstanding Pommard, from old vines planted in 1959. **18**