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Vincent Girardin

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Girardin described 2008 as a "capricious" season, with a cold summer saved at the end. He eliminated a lot of pink grapes (there was more rot in 2007, he said), and the wines have firm tannins and plenty of energy. They're not exceptional but they are classic, he told me, and they should age for a long time. In comparison to the new crop of wines, said Girardin, the 2007s lack a bit of nervosite and are a bit too easy. Girardin told me he did just two pigeages for each wine in 2008, as punching down the cap is "too violent" and the point is to be as simple as possible in vinifying reds. Girardin made a number of small cuvees in 2008 (four or five barrels' worth, or "just enough to vinify") and is now working with a couple of new suppliers (the Chambertin, Vosne-Romanee Suchots and Grands-Echezeaux are new this year). The 2008s were racked before the 2009 harvest following the end of the malolactic fermentations. (Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL)

2008 Pommard Les Grands Epenots Good deep ruby-red. Very dark aromas of blackberry, black cherry, violet and spices. Juicy but a bit spiky, with dark fruit and bitter chocolate flavors accompanied by peppery and herbal nuances. The tannins are reasonably smooth, but there's something metallic here that I'm not wild for. **85-87**

2008 Corton Bressandes Medium ruby-red. Riper aromas of black cherry, violet, licorice and spicy oak. The palate offers cleaner fruit flavors than the Grands Epenots, with strong but more successfully integrated acidity giving cut to the middle palate. More sweetness and length here. Girardin's team picks these grapes as well as the Charmes-Chambertin. **87-90**

2008 Gevrey Chambertin Cazetiers Bright ruby-red. Wild, expressive aromas of black raspberry and game. Offers a bit less volume and texture than the Bressandes, with the result that the peppery acidity comes off as slightly tart. A midweight, moderately intense wine with notes of spices, game and smoke. **87-89**

2008 Vosne Romanee Suchots Red ruby. Sexy, slightly reduced nose offers musky raspberry, blackberry and huckleberry aromas complemented by a smoky quality. Broad on entry, then nicely sweet in the middle, conveying an impression of riper acidity without any loss of freshness. Plenty of smoky, meaty, underbrushy complexity here. Finishes rather fat and lush, with building tannins and very good length. **88-91**

2008 Clos De La Roche Medium red-ruby. Red raspberry, mocha, brown spices and underbrush on the nose. Sweet and intense, with harmonious acidity framing the flavors of crushed black cherry and blueberry. Plenty of soil character on display. Conveys an impression of medicinal reserve and finishes with an edge of acidity supported by fat fruit. **89-92**

2008 Charmes Chambertin Bright ruby-red. Slightly metallic aromas of black raspberry, licorice and bitter chocolate, with a suggestion of charred oak (Girardin used 40% new oak for his grand crus in 2008, up a bit from recent vintages). Supple and rather refined in the mouth, with lovely dark fruit flavors offering a subtle sweetness. Juicy in the middle but shows an edge of acidity on the back. I got the impression from Girardin, who prefers this wine to the 2007 version, that this sample may contain a higher percentage of juice from new barrels than the ultimate blend will. **90-92**

2008 Clos Vougeot Red-ruby. Black cherry and licorice complicated by fresh herbs and pepper: classic cool year Clos Vougeot aromas. Juicy and tight, showing less ripeness and expansiveness than the Charmes-Chambertin. Currently displaying more spices, pepper and herbs than primary fruit. Ultimately a supple wine but could use more personality. Finishes with dusty tannins and good cut and length. **88-91**

2008 Echezeaux Medium red-ruby. Expressive aromas and flavors of redcurrant, licorice and tobacco. Sweet, suave and broad, with a plumper texture than most of the foregoing samples. Finishes with suave tannins and good subtle persistence. **90-92**

2008 Grands Echezeaux Red-ruby. Complex, ripe aromas of flowers, minerals and dark chocolate; conveys an impression of tiny grapes. Fat, lush and sweet but less forthcoming than the Echezeaux. This has a silkier texture and rather pliant tannins but is a bit awkward today. But there's more inherent complexity here than in the Echezeaux. **90-93**

2008 Chambertin Clos De Beze Deep red-ruby. Deep aromas of crushed blueberry, violet and licorice pastille; conveys a cooler aspect than the last couple of samples. Then sweet and dense but lively on the palate, with noteworthy energy and a fine-grained texture to the flavors of crushed black fruits. The broad finish coats the mouth with flavor and the tannins are suave and smooth. Offers terrific potential. **91-94**

2008 Chambertin Red-ruby. Crushed black cherry and violet on the withdrawn, slightly medicinal nose; like the Clos de Beze, this shows the cool side of the vintage. Less sweet and pliant than the Clos de Beze, with hints of violet and spices and a distinctly inky quality in the early going. Best today on the long finish, but this is primary and very backward. Girardin notes that these grapes, which are from the lower portion of the Chambertin vineyard, looked better than those from the Clos de Beze. **90-93**

2007 Corton Renardes Good dark red. Sauvage aromas of black raspberry, smoke and game. Wild, ripe and open-knit, with considerable fat and sweetness to the flavors of dark raspberry, smoke and game. Sweet tannins will not get in the way of enjoying this wine now. **89**

2007 Gevrey Chambertin Cazetiers Moderately saturated medium red. More vibrant on the nose than the Renardes, but still with a wild character to the aromas of dark raspberry and flowers. Less lush and more restrained on the palate, with good cut and definition to the spicy red fruit flavors. Finishes firm and persistent. This needs a year or two of patience. Girardin told me he sold off eight of his ten barrels' worth of this wine to a negociant in bottles. **90**

2007 Echezeaux Good full red. Flamboyant aromas of roasted red fruits and smoked meat. Suave and fine-grained on entry, then sweet and round in the middle, with an almost candied quality to the sweet raspberry fruit. Finishes broad, ripe and long, with a fine dusting of tannins. Another wine that's perfect for drinking young. **90**

2007 Charmes Chambertin Good deep red. Captivating aromas of raspberry and gibier lifted by a floral element missing in the other 2007s I tasted chez Girardin. Suave on entry, then sweet but light on its feet in the middle palate, with lovely floral lift to the raspberry and game flavors. Harmonious acids and broad, fine tannins give verve to the back end. Lovely wine. **92**

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