

Bruce Sanderson

Drilling Down in Burgundy

The concept of *terroir* is fundamental to Burgundy. The distinctive nuances of each vineyard give the region's wines a strong sense of place.

A vertical tasting in June allowed me to explore one of Burgundy's top *terroirs*—Gevrey-Chambertin Les Cazetiers—as expressed through the wines of Domaine Dupont-Tisserandot. Winemaker Didier Chevillon poured nearly every Les Cazetiers made from 2005 back to 1988, the oldest vintage remaining in the cellar; no 1994, however, was available. The non-blind tasting took place at Chevillon's home.

Les Cazetiers is ranked a *premier cru* vineyard in Burgundy's quality hierarchy. It's situated in a band of *premiers crus* above the village that is considered to have the finest *premiers crus* in Gevrey. At 22.5 acres, Les Cazetiers is Gevrey's second-largest *premier cru*, after Lavaut St.-Jacques. Dupont-Tisserandot owns 5.2 acres, the domaine's largest single holding among its 52 acres. Currently, the vines are 60 years old.

The tasting clearly revealed the Les Cazetiers *terroir*, and demonstrated that the best vintages prevail over time. I could trace the evolution of the house style, as well, which Chevillon has fine-tuned over the past decade; since 2000 the wines offer more fruit. Most of all, the tasting provided insight into how red Burgundies age.

The consistency of the Cazetiers imprint was recognizable: a smoky note, sometimes also expressed as tobacco and occasionally as forest floor and briar. The fruit component is cherry, often macerated, like jam. It is supported by berry, plum and cassis, depending on the vintage. As the wines evolve, a licorice note enters, as do autumn leaves and leather. And there's always an underlying minerality.

Not surprisingly, the top wines hailed from two great vintages:

Les Cazetiers Vintages and Scores

2005 94	1999 91	1992 90
2004 89	1998 89	1991 79
2003 91	1997 88	1990 94
2002 92	1996 93	1989 89
2001 93	1995 86	1988 89
2000 87	1993 92	

2005 and 1990. The '05 offered beautiful, pure blackberry flavors framed by oak, vibrant acidity and fine tannins for structure. The '90 showed the complexity that great Burgundy develops with age. Smoke and macerated red and black fruit aromas mingled with licorice and tobacco. It had sweetness from ripe fruit, and the tannins were absorbed into the silky texture. I gave both wines 94 points on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale.

The 1991, from a challenging yet successful vintage for reds, proved to be the most disappointing (79 points). The bouquet revealed some oxidation, with cooked fruit and fig notes. Though it started out with sweet fruit, it quickly turned dry and astringent. The 1992, on the other hand, generally considered inferior to '91 because higher yields resulted in softer wines, showed freshness, grip and length, with jammy plum and wild cherry flavors. It earned 90 points.

Dupont-Tisserandot is a domaine that deserves greater recognition. Chevillon's wife, Patricia, and her sister, Marie-Françoise Guillard, are the proprietors, having inherited the domaine from their parents. Chevillon began working with his father-in-law, Bernard Dupont, in 1989, taking on sole responsibility for the vinification in 1995. He is assisted by cellar master Christian Bernard.



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The grapes are 100 percent destemmed and sorted both in the vineyard and in the *cuvée*. Chevillon has added a cold soak, for seven to nine days, since the 1995 vintage. Four or five punch-downs during the process prevent the extraction of green or astringent tannins. Generally, the wines are kept on their fine lees until the first racking in July. Since 2000, Les Cazetiers has been matured in 100 percent new oak for a minimum of 16 months. Wines are lightly filtered before bottling.

Chevillon calls the Dupont-Tisserandot style "profound but supple." "I look for the expression of *terroir* and Pinot Noir," he says. "You can make a hard wine by extraction, but that's not what I look for."

The wines show bright fruit flavors and silky textures, yet also reflect their vineyards. I generally find that Dupont-Tisserandot's wines can be enjoyed for their youthful fruit. The tasting also showed me how well they age and how clearly they express the character of this exceptional vineyard.

Senior editor Bruce Sanderson has been with *Wine Spectator* since 1993.