

# iDealwine update : follow the star

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**One of the shining lights of Burgundy, Méo-Camuzet was a sideline for its preoccupied owners for many years. But since the 1980s it has risen to become highly sought after on the primary and secondary markets**



Located in the heart of Vosne-Romanée, domaine Méo-Camuzet is one of the undisputed stars of Burgundy. Yet until as recently as 1983, the majority of Méo-Camuzet's holdings were leased to other winemakers, and most of the wine was sold to négociants.

The domaine was founded at the close of the 19th century by Étienne Camuzet, whose passion for grape growing was somewhat eclipsed by his commitments as full-time politician, as mayor of Vosne-Romanée and deputy of the Côte d'Or. Nevertheless, over the course of several years, he acquired large numbers of vineyards, including the vineyards of the Clos du Vougeot château.

Given that most of his time was spent in Paris, Camuzet rented his land in Burgundy to sharecroppers to farm. When his daughter inherited the domaine, she had no successors, and the land was passed down to Jean Méo, a similarly engaged figure in national politics, serving as a member of Charles de Gaulle's cabinet, who directed the estate from Paris.

A new chapter began in the 1980s, when many sharecroppers began to retire. This served as a catalyst for substantial changes at domaine Méo-Camuzet. In 1985, Jean's son, Jean-Nicolas, returned from Paris to take the helm. He decided to begin reclaiming the highly-pedigreed land to release bottlings from the domaine itself. To do so, he sought the advice of Henri Jayer, one of the region's greatest winemakers. Jayer's involvement with the domain dates back as long ago as World

War II, when he began farming some of Méo-Camuzet's parcels under his own label. He served as a mentor to Jean-Nicolas up until his retirement in 1988.

The estate's releases from the late 1980s are said to display perceptible Henri Mayer influence, a style that, for some, had faded completely by the mid-1990s. Often praised for their balance and purity of fruit, wines from Domaine Méo-Camuzet are perfectly suited to long cellar ageing. They are – paradoxically – structured and concentrated, with oak spices, but are also delicate and highly refined, gaining in precision year after year.

Jean-Nicolas Méo continues to oversee the cellar and sales; the vineyards are managed by Christian Faurois, son of one of the domaine's original sharecroppers. They run the house together, and produce some of the finest wines in the Côte d'Or. The estate now covers more than three hectares of grand cru plots, and 8ha of some of the most prestigious premiers crus in Nuits-Saint-Georges and Vosne-Romanée. Its astounding portfolio includes six grands crus (Richebourg, Clos de Vougeot, Échezeaux, Corton Clos Rognet, Corton Les Perrières, and Corton La Vigne au Saint), 10 premier crus (from the communes of Vosne-Romanée, Nuits-St-Georges, Chambolle-Musigny, and Fixin), several village wines, one Bourgogne Rouge and three whites.

With the exception of sites that are difficult to access by tractor – which receive the occasional herbicide or anti-rot treatment – the vineyards are farmed organically. Yields are kept low, at around 25hl/ha for the grands crus and 35hl/ha for the premiers crus. In the winery, the grapes are sorted, destemmed and cooled to 15°C for a brief pre-fermentation maceration before a vatting period of around 18 days. Temperatures are kept between 30°C and 32°C. Initially, the juice is pumped over twice a day, followed by some pumping down later in the process.

#### Little intervention

The wines are matured in barrel in 100% new oak for the grands crus, 60-70% for the premiers crus and 50% for the key villages. Jean-Nicolas is gradually reducing the amount of new wood used in his wines' élevages, and generally strives to intervene very little in the winemaking process. The wines are not fined or filtered before bottling.

Following years of a steady, albeit modest, incline in Méo-Camuzet auction prices, we registered a significant rise in interest in 2018. The extreme scarcity of the three previous vintages, combined with the domaine's ever-growing reputation, may explain the significant price increase in the primary and secondary markets. One of the domaine's finest bottlings – its Richebourg Grand Cru – consistently sells for upwards of €1,500 (£1,353); the 2005 vintage reached €2,000 in summer 2020.

Several of Méo-Camuzet's Premier Cru releases are the object of similarly increased interest, even in recent vintages, revealing the extent of their collectability. The mythic 2017 Vosne-Romanée Premier Cru Au Cros Parantoux, for instance, appeared at auction frequently last year, never failing to fetch less than €1,000. A magnum of the same cuvée in the 2009 vintage sold for over €3,000 in early 2020.

The team's efforts in the past 30 years to raise the quality bar ever higher ensures Méo-Camuzet a spot in the Burgundian hall of fame. The future for this domaine, that, much like the great Mayer himself, succeeds in marrying tradition and modernity, certainly looks bright.

## About iDealwine

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