



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

## DOMAINE A. & P. DE VILLAINES

Country: France

Region: Burgundy

Appellation(s): Bourgogne, Rully,  
Mercurey, Bouzeron

Producer: Aubert de Villaine

Founded: 1971

Annual Production: 11,000 cases

Farming: Organic (since 1997)

Website: [www.de-villaine.com](http://www.de-villaine.com)



Aubert de Villaine deserves the accolades he receives. He is a reluctant hero, an unlikely trait in a man of such accomplishment, intellect, and inherent sense of *noblesse*. Heir to one of the most enviable wine legacies of all time, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, the young Aubert was more interested in literature and law than wine. After spending time in New York working for an importer of Burgundian wines, he finally returned home in the mid-nineteen sixties to assume his role as co-director of DRC.

In the 1970s, Aubert and his American wife, Pamela, sought less pedigreed pastures to call home. They finally settled in the village of Bouzeron, well-situated between Chassagne-Montrachet, Santenay, Rully, and Mercurey, in the Côte Chalonnaise. However high profile his day job, Aubert still considers himself a *vigneron* like any other, and Bouzeron's off-the-beaten-path location left him alone to make his own wines without the demands of upholding an international reputation. The domaine was horribly rundown when the de Villaines took over, but years of studying this unique *terroir* have made them pioneers in one of the last forgotten enclaves of Burgundy. The monks of the great abbey of Cluny first planted vines here in the twelfth century, leaving a legacy that has endured for centuries. Consequently, the grape varietal that reigns supreme today is the dry, white Aligoté—an unusual celebrity given its work-horse reputation in the middle of Chardonnay country. Bouzeron boasts the best Aligoté in Burgundy, the Aligoté Doré, (instead of the lesser clone, Aligoté Vert) which gives smaller yields to produce wines with more expressive aromatics. Although the grape was overlooked until 1979 when it first earned the appellation Bourgogne Aligoté de Bouzeron, the I.N.A.O. finally upgraded the appellation to A.O.C. Bouzeron in 1997, largely due to Aubert's advocacy over the years. Aubert's single vineyard Bourgognes, both in *blanc* and *rouge*, are equally outstanding representations of the unlikely pedigree found in this corner of the region.

The de Villaines farm three appellations within the Côte Chalonnaise, namely Bouzeron (Aligoté), Rully (Chardonnay) and Mercurey (Pinot Noir). Their single-vineyard parcels are stunning examples of what this complex and amazing *terroir* can yield. Though their wines are quite enjoyable young, their ability to age well is what one might expect from a master such as de Villaine. Much of this is due to both the diversity of his vinestock and his organic and biodynamic methodology in the

1605 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702

[www.kermitlynch.com](http://www.kermitlynch.com) | [info@kermitlynch.com](mailto:info@kermitlynch.com)

Berkeley Retail: 510.524.1524 | California Wholesale: 510.524.1808 | National Distribution: 707.963.8293



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vineyards, both of which Aubert stands by with great conviction. He also ferments his Mercreys in wood *caves*, a style adopted from DRC.

Pierre de Benoist, Aubert's nephew, currently directs the domaine, upholding the sense of tradition, excellence, and standards for which it has become so well-known. In 2010, Aubert was awarded *Decanter Magazine's* prestigious "Man of the Year" Award, a distinction that, unsurprisingly, the modest Aubert seemed reluctant to accept.

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
<b>Bouzeron</b>	Aligoté Doré	10 – 90 years	Clay, Limestone, Marl	12.5 ha
<b>Bourgogne Blanc</b> <i>Les Clous Aimé</i>	Chardonnay	20 – 55 years	Clay, Limestone	3.4 ha
<b>Rully Blanc</b> <i>Les Saint-Jacques</i>	Chardonnay	17 years	Clay, Limestone, Silt	1.7 ha
<b>Bourgogne Rouge</b> <i>La Fortune</i>	Pinot Noir	20 – 25 years	Clay, Limestone	2.3 ha
<b>Bourgogne Rouge</b> <i>Les Clous</i>	Pinot Noir	20 – 25 years	Clay, Limestone	.43 ha
<b>Bourgogne Rouge</b> <i>La Digoine</i>	Pinot Noir	35 – 45 years	Clay, Limestone	1.8 ha
<b>Mercrey Rouge</b> <i>Les Montots</i>	Pinot Noir	40 – 50 years	Clay, Limestone	1.6 ha
<b>Rully Rouge 1er Cru</b> <i>Les Champs Cloux</i>	Pinot Noir	45 years average	Clay, Limestone	1.9 ha

\* "ha"=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

### VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

#### Bouzeron:

- Wine is vinified in wood *foudres*, capacity of 30 to 40 hecto-liters
- The only intervention during fermentation and aging of wine is the maintaining of temperature between 20 and 22 degrees Celsius
- Each parcel is pressed separately in a small pneumatic press
- The must is put in stainless steel for a 24 – 36 hour cold-soak, then the wine is transferred to *foudre* where it stays for fermentation and *élevage*
- The lees are never stirred unless it is needed (in the case of reduction for example)
- The wine is raised for 10 to 12 months depending on the vintage

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#### **Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise *Les Clous Aimé* & Rully *Les Saints Jacques*:**

- Fermentation and raising of the wine are identical to the Bouzeron except, 80% of the fermentation and aging is in *foudre* and 20% is in barrel

#### **Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise *La Fortune*, *Les Clous*, & *La Digoine*:**

- Careful selection and sorting of the grapes is done in the vineyard
- Wine is fermented and aged in wood *caves* with a minimum 2/3 of the stems, depending on the vintage
- The wine stays in *cave* for 10 to 12 days, so as to add extra skin tannins and just a little tannin from the seeds and stems
- After alcoholic fermentation, the wine and must are separated and the must is pressed
- The pressed must is tasted separately and sometimes blended back into the wine
- The wine is raised for 10 to 12 months depending on the vintage

#### **Mercrey *Les Montots*, Rully *Rouge 1er Cru Les Champs Cloux*:**

- Fermentation and aging is identical to the *Fortune* and *Digoine* except the wine stays in *cave* for 14 to 17 days during fermentation

In general, this style of fermentation depends exclusively on the quality of the grapes that enters the cellar. The balance and vibrancy in these wines comes from the quality of the grapes, the level of maturity, their cleanliness, and the quality of the skin. If everything is in balance, the wines will express their village of origin to reveal their native *terroir*.