

## Domaine Marc Colin



Pierre-Yves Colin, 33, took over the winemaking duties from his father Marc, in 1995. He has been updating the winery since 1999, investing in new equipment and improving the vineyard management. Together with his father and two brothers, Joseph and Damien, Colin has this 50-acre domaine on the right course.

The domaine makes wines of finesse, full-flavored and well-balanced with oak. The whites from the stonier soils are firmer and taste of minerals; those from the deeper soils have more breadth and weight.

Colin began harvesting Sept. 1, waiting for the heat to dissipate. "If you have grapes in the tank at [95 degrees F], you lose fruit," he says. He adds that the grapes were very ripe but not overripe.

The Chassagne-Montrachet Caillerets (92-94) benefited from the limestone soils, which gave it elegance, intensity and a firm structure. The Batard-Montrachet (92-94), from 20-year-old vines, is rich and round, with a vibrant structure underneath a long finish. Colin made one 400-liter barrel of Montrachet in 2003. From 90-year-old vines, it is complex, creamy and mouthfilling, without being heavy, and has a long finish (92-94).

## Domaine Leflaive

While some domains cover several communes, Domaine Leflaive's 52 acres of vineyards focus on Puligny-Montrachet. The only exception is a small parcel in Blagny that used to make a red but from 2003 will make a Meursault *premier cru*.

At the beginning of the 1990s, control of the estate passed from the late Vincent Leflaive to his daughter, Anne-Claude, and Pierre Morey became winemaker. The domaine has been completely biodynamic since 1998.

Pierre Morey calls the 2003s precocious. The harvest began Aug. 29, after the temperature dropped 18 degrees F. He describes the wines as reaching a better balance month after month, but does not think it will be a vintage for long keeping.



Puligny-Montrachet Combettes (92-94) abuts Meursault Charmes and shows the Meursault richness, with good density and harmony. Bienvenue-Batard-Montrachet (92-94) was reticent in aroma, with honey and mineral notes. The Batard-Montrachet (92-94) upped the intensity a notch with fat, mouthfilling fruit, yet remained fresh and long. The Chevalier-Montrachet (92-94) was shy in aroma, yet had its characteristic creamy texture and long, expressive finish. The Montrachet (95-100) combines the power of the Batard and finesse of the Chevalier.

## Tokaj's Rebirth

Foreign investors help to resurrect one of Europe's most historic wine regions

*By Bruce Schoenfeld*



On the crest of a small ridge in the foothills of Hungary's Zemplen mountains, only a few miles from the Slovakian border, director Istvan Turoczi of the Royal Tokaji Wine Co. waves an arm toward the red mud of the Szt. Tamas vineyard. Then he gestures to his right, indicating the dun-colored, stone-studded dirt of a vineyard called Betsek. "Look how absolutely different they are," says Turoczi, 42. "Totally distinct sites."

The names of these vineyards hardly resonate like those of Burgundy's Montrachet or La Tache, but their soil has been under vine for a millennium. Vineyards were already being cultivated in the region of Tokaj toward the close of the ninth century, according to the *Tokaj-Hegyalia Album*, an oversize compendium published in 1867 in English, French, German and Hungarian (and recently reprinted). And more than a century and a half before the Bordeaux Classification of 1855, Tokaj's vineyards had already been graded and ranked. Later classifications followed.

But by the 1960s, Tokaj's wine quality had badly deteriorated. The famous sweet Tokaji-made from botrytis-affected Aszu grapes blended with proportions of Furmint, Harslevelu and Muscat and dubbed "the king of wines and the wine of kings" by France's Louis XIV-was being augmented with alcohol and, often, caramel coloring. Volume demands made by the Soviet Union, which effectively controlled agricultural production in the Eastern Bloc, meant little attention was paid to differences among parcels of vineyard land. Quantity mattered; quality did not.

### ISTVÁN SZEPSY

These days, Tokaj is eagerly embracing modernity. A manageable three-hour drive east from Budapest, Tokaj has become something of a weekend destination for foreign tourists and Hungarians alike, and today features ambitious restaurants and luxury hotels with all the amenities.

Standards of the modern wine world have also arrived in Tokaj, even as the high-vaulted, subterranean tasting rooms and centuries-old barrel tunnels covered in *Cladosporium cellare* mold seem to be the only places left in the region where cell phones aren't constantly jangling. "I rejected the entire 2001 vintage," boasts Istvan Szepsy, previously a technical director for the old state-run cooperative (and a former winemaker for Royal Tokaji), whose own Kiralyudvar wines are beginning to arrive in the United States. "Sweet wines, dry wines-everything. I didn't want to have to explain it."



After four decades in power, Hungary's Communist regime fell. The best of Takaj's vineyards, seized from private landholders in the 1940s and collectivized under state control, were auctioned off in a four-year process; nearly all went to French and other European investors. From there, differences in winemaking philosophies led to a broad range of styles, as winemakers debated the advantages of soaking the shriveled botrytized grapes (called Aszu berries) in juice, wine or must; fermenting the sweetened wine in traditional large oak barrels or stainless steel tanks; and aging the wines in old Hungarian or new French oak.

Now, with innovators becoming more traditional and the traditionalists experimenting with innovation, the categories have become blurred. In their place, house styles are starting to emerge. Some wineries use differences in *terrior* to make single-vineyard Aszu wines; Royal Tokaji makes five of them. Some, such as Disznoko and Chateau Pajzos, operate as estate wineries, making a line of wines that express the characteristics of several vineyards on a single property. Others, such as late-arrival Chateau Dereszla, pay strict attention to vineyard specificity in order to create a more balanced and consistent blend.

A decade and a half into the era of private ownership of wineries-and little more than a decade since additional foreign investment in Hungarian vineyards was halted by law in 1994-certain singularities in the region's 13,300 acres under vine are beginning to emerge. "Chateaus are getting more alike in their styles, but *terrior* has definitely started to appear," Szepsy says. "You can taste the soils in the wines much more than before."

Across the region, too, producers are turning to dry white wines and even nonbotrytized sweet wines as ways to extend their brands-and their bank accounts. These high-acid whites, made predominantly from Furmint, will never be confused with Alsace Riesling, but they provide enjoyable drinking for consumers and a steady cash flow for these wineries, many of which are still paying off investors and loans.

Excellent vintages in 1999 and 2000 provide a showcase for the new styles in both dry and sweet wines. The 1999s in particular, with high acid levels that help frame subtle flavor differences, stand as textbook examples of what the best of today's Tokaji producers are trying to achieve. The 2000s are riper, richer and bigger in the mouth but still show distinct minerality amid the honey and apricot flavors. Still, the 1993 vintage remains a benchmark-and in most cases, wines from that harvest have reached full maturity.

Progress reports from four of *Wine Spectator's* highest-scoring Takaji producers follow.

#### Royal Tokaji Wine Co.



Istvan Turoczi arranges five bottles on a tasting table, then proceeds to lovingly describe the vineyard used to produce each one. "We use only barrel fermentation, nothing in stainless steel, in order to best show the *terrior*," he relates. "We use our own yeast and macerate as long as seven to 10 days, depending on the vintage. No new oak because we want to show off the elegance of the fruit."

This traditional approach, coupled with the elegant lettering on Royal Tokaji's labels and its presence in the world market (80 percent of the wine is exported to 30 countries), gives the appearance that the winery has been around for decades. It hasn't. Less than two decades ago, just as the old Soviet Bloc was opening to Western investment, the founders, including Danish enologists Peter Vinding-Diers, convinced 62 local vineyard owners to form a cooperative.

The first vintages of Royal Tokaji wines, beginning with 1990, were made in individual cellars by Vinding-Diers and Szepsy (now of his own Kiralyudvar estate) with british wine writer Hugh Johnson as a principal and unofficial consultant. The wines were then brought to Royal's cellars for cask-aging and, finally, bottling. A curious system, it led to uneven wines and high costs.

By 1993, before the 1990 Aszu wines had even hit the marketplace, the association was nearly bankrupt. An infusion of money from outside investors arrived just in time for the outstanding '93 vintage, which helped reintroduce sweet Tokaji to the world. (Six of Royal Tokaji's 1993 bottlings, including three of the single-vineyard Aszu wines, scored 94 points or higher.) It was also just in time to purchase some of the best vineyards from what remained of the old cooperative before foreign investment in vineyard land was outlawed.

And make no mistake: Vineyards are what Royal Tokaji is about. Turoczi says his still wines can come from anywhere, "as long as it's relatively high in alcohol and high in acid," but the concentration of flavor in the Aszu berries is what affects the sweet wine. In 2000, 1999, 1996, 1995 and 1993, single-vineyard Aszu wines were produced from five of Royal Tokaji's flagship vineyards: Birsalmas, Betsek, Nyulaszo, Szt. Tamas and Mezes Maly.

But since 2000, no Aszu wines have been made; in the opinion of the management team, the botrytis hasn't been prevalent enough on Royal's vineyard land to allow them, and no one wants to buy Aszu berries. Not surprisingly, income has been down.

Rumors abound that the property's largest investment group is anxious and may want to sell its share, which could mean more upheaval for a producer that has already experienced more than enough. But then, Royal Tokaji's greatest resource will remain in place no matter who owns the property. "You can't move a vineyard," Turoczi points out.

## WINE REVIEWS

### California

#### 90 pts. Seghesio Zinfandel Sonoma County 2003

Pushes ripeness to the edge of jam, juicy, complex boysenberry and blackberry fruit. Has ripe, integrated tannins, with a touch of cedar and plum on the finish. Drink now through 2009. 52,000 cases made.

#### 94 pts. Rudd Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2002

Dark, dense and concentrated. A rich, powerful wine that packs in layers of complex flavors, yet maintains a sense of grace and finesse. Core flavors are built around ripe, lively plum, currant, herb and smoky-toasty oak, but at the end what impresses you most is the elegance and polish. Best from 2006 through 2014. 2,550 cases made.

#### 94 pts. Turnbull Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Fortuna Vineyard 2002

A rich, seductive style, with tiers of flavors built around a center of ripe currant, blackberry and plum and lots of exotic mocha-cedar and spicy oak that add wonderful dimension. Also wins points for its smooth, harmonious texture, finishing with a strong push of ripe Cabernet flavors. Drink now through 2013. 140 cases made.



#### 90 pts. Whitehall Lane Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Leonardini Vineyard 2001

Firm, rich and concentrated, with a tightly wound core of earthy currant, cedar, plum and wild berry. Holds on to its focus with ripe, deep, perfumed fruit and a long, rich aftertaste that has a chewy tannins. Best from 2006 through 2012. 486 cases made.



#### 87 pts. Seghesio Omaggio Four Generations Sonoma County 2002

Firm and concentrated, with a taut band of earthy currant, black cherry and tobacco. Tannins are a bit aggressive, giving it a tough, chewy aftertaste. Decant. Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese. Best from 2006 through 2011. 600 cases made.

#### 93 pts. Turnbull Merlot Oakville Fortuna Vineyard 2002

Great harmony, richness and finesse, with a core of currant, blackberry and wild berry fruit shaded by toasty, mocha-laced oak. Ripe and bold but exceptionally well-balanced, with a persistent finish. Very impressive. Drink now through 2011. 105 cases made.

#### 92 pts. Seghesio Zinfandel Alexander Valley Home Ranch 2003

Captures the essence of Zinfandel with its wonderful purity of flavor. Built around a center of wild berry, black cherry and boysenberry, delivering a mouthful of fruit with light oak shadings and a long, luxurious finish that keeps repeating the berry themes. Drink now through 2009. 2,450 cases made.

#### 88 pts. Rudd Chardonnay Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2002

Good intensity, with a tasty core of spice, pear, nutmeg and fig, picking up a touch of hazelnut and citrus on the finish. Drink now through 2008. 950 cases made.

#### 86 pts. Stephen Ross Chardonnay Edna Valley 2003

Core fruit flavors are built around creamy fig, pear and nectarine. A touch of hazelnut and nutmeg seasoning adds a nice flavor dimension. Drink now. 864 cases made.



## Oregon



### 90 pts. **Domaine Serene Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Jerusalem Hill Vineyard 2002**

Firm and chewy, with tarry, mineral-scented, ripe blackberry and cherry flavors that persist on the generous finish. Best from 2007 through 2012. 300 cases made.

### 90 pts. **Domaine Serene Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Yamhill Cuvee 2002**

Smooth and spicy, with a smoky edge to the fleshy plum and currant flavors, lingering enticingly as the soft tannins wrap themselves around the finish. Best from 2006 through 2012. 1,391 cases made.

### 89 pts. **Bergstrom Pinot Noir Williamette Valley De Lancellotti Vineyard 2003**

Chewy tannins frame a rich, lithe core of black cherry, tar and dark chocolate flavors that pick up speed on the long, generous finish. Not much finesse now, but cellaring might help. Best after 2007. 230 cases made.

### 89 pts. **Chehalem Pinot Noir Williamette Valley 3 Vineyard 2002**

Ripe and raucous. Not big, but a lively mouthful of wild berry, cherry and earthy juice flavors that persist on the generous, smoky finish. Best from 2006 through 2010. 5,110 cases made.

### 89 pts. **WillaKenzie Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Kiana 2002**

Earthy, cinnamon-scented, with plenty of cherry and mineral flavor at the center, persisting nicely on the polished finish. Best from 2007 through 2012. 594 cases made.

### 87 pts. **Adelsheim Pinot Noir Oregon 2003**

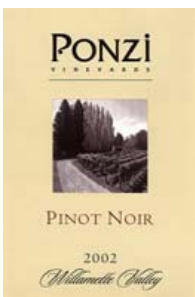
Light and polished, with lovely raspberry and chocolate flavors that remain smooth and seamless through the finish. Drink now. 7,288 cases made.

### 87 pts. **Chehalem Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Ridgecrest Vineyards 2002**

Firm, juicy and ripe, packed with black cherry and raspberry fruit and layered with smoky, earthy notes that eventually win out on the finish. Best after 2006. 1,370 cases made.

### 95 pts. **Bergstrom Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Bergstrom Vineyard Whole Cluster Selection 2003**

Big, round and opulent, filling in all the nooks and crannies with plum, currant and blackberry flavors, shaded with subtle spice and pepper notes. The finish is beautifully knit and supple enough to let the flavors echo for days. Drink now through 2015. 25 cases made.



### 92 pts. **Domaine Serene Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Evenstad Reserve 2002**

Polished, round and subtle, with remarkable presence. Shows beautiful plum, blackberry and sweet spice flavors that linger effortlessly on the refined finish. Delicious. Drink now through 2012. 5,500 cases made.

### 92 pts. **Ponzi Pinot Noir Williamette Valley Reserve 2002**

Polished and elegant presence, with a lovely range of plum, cherry and mint flavors. Shaded with subtle notes of smoke and toast as the flavors linger gently. All beautifully balanced and refined. Drink now through 2012. 900 cases made.

### 91 pts. **Adelsheim Pinot Noir Yamhill County Ribbon Springs Vineyard 2003**

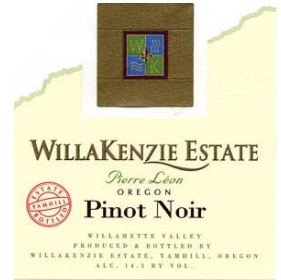
Fairly light, with an open texture and pretty plum and berry flavors that float enticingly on the seamless finish. Drink now through 2013. 113 cases made.

### 91 pts. **Chehalem Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Stolle Vineyards 2002**

Broad but deftly balanced, with juicy acidity. Distinctive for its raspberry and lingonberry aromas and flavors that hang nicely on alithe frame, letting it all linger on the finish. Drink now through 2012. 809 cases made

**91 pts. Domaine Serene Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Guadalupe Vineyard 2002**

Supple, soft and silky, with ripe currant, plum and subtle spice flavors that persist gently on the round, open finish. A big wine that remains graceful. Drink now through 2010. 430 cases made.



**91 pts. WillaKenzie Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Pierre Leon 2002**

Bright, brash and juicy. A lively mouthfeel of cherry, cinnamon and bittersweet chocolate flavors rocketing through the racy finish. Have it now with food or watch it develop. Best from 2007 through 2012. 1,329 cases made.

**90 pts. Chehalem Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Reserve 2002**

Firm and refined, a remarkable, graceful red, with well-modulated currant, red berry, bay leaf and spice flavors that persist on the fine-grained finish. Best from 2006 through 2010. 633 cases made.

**90 pts. Adelsheim Chardonnay Yamhill County Caitlin's Reserve 2002**

Has reserve and elegance, with nicely formed pear, pepper and cream flavors that dance gracefully through the long, polished finish. Drink now through 2009. 140 cases made.

**87 pts. Bergstrom Pinot Gris Willamette Valley 2003**

Soft and round, generous with its citrus and apricot flavors, finishing with a juicy tang. Drink now. 1,300 cases made.

**87 pts. Chehalem Pinot Gris Willamette Valley Reserve 2003**

Bright and focused, with citrusy liveliness balanced with a spicy, grainy component on the long finish. Drink now. 512 cases made

France

**91 pts. Dominique Laurent Beaune Premier Cru Vieilles Vignes 2002**

Very sweet cherry, berry and spice aromas and flavors highlight this meaty, brooding Pinot Noir. Balanced, with the oak still prominent today, but this will fade as the wine ages. Lingering finish of green olive, sandalwood and cherry. Best from 2007 through 2015.

**90 pts. Jean-Marc Bouley Volnay Les Carelles 2002**

Very tight and firm, with ripe cherry flavor and plenty of finesse. The tannins are present and well-integrated, supporting the fruit. Drink now through 2012.

**91 pts. Mommessin Chambolle-Musigny Grande Exception 2002**

Very pure, elegant and concentrated in its cherry and violet aromas and flavors, with a firm underlying structure. Tannins are very fine, and the cherry note lingers on the aftertaste. Best from 2007 through 2014. 125 cases imported.

**98 pts. Vincent Girardin Chambertin-Clos de Beze Vieilles Vignes 2002**

A brilliant red. Wild and feral yet refined, combining cherry, mineral, licorice, animal and underbrush notes with sweet, concentrated fruit and ripe, vibrant tannins. Shows an underlying energy, with a long, long finish. Best from 2012 through 2025. 45 cases imported.

**95 pts. Dominique Laurent Mazis-Chambertin 2002**

Multidimensional, offering pure cherry, black currant, raspberry, chocolate, mineral and spice notes on a richly tannic structure. Shows lush fruit initially, then the tannins remind you that this is a nascent wine with a great future. Best from 2012 through 2025.

**93 pts. Mommessin Gevrey-Chambertin Lavaut St.-Jacques 2002**

Round and opulent, exhibiting black cherry, cassis and a hint of chocolate deftly balanced by bright acidity and fine, ripe tannins. Shows class and elegance. Long, mouthwatering finish. Best from 2008 through 2018. 45 cases imported.

**92 pts. Vincent Girardin Gevrey-Chambertin Vieilles Vignes 2002**

A pure, elegant Gevrey. Medium-bodied and bursting with fresh cherry, berry and earth notes. Concentrated, with a sense of refinement. Excellent length, with fine tannins. Best from 2007 through 2018. 400 cases imported.

**88 pts. Bruno Clair Marsannay Les Vaudenelles 2002**

Wild cherry, berry and licorice highlight this light-bodied, sinewy red. Bright and balanced, this has personality. Drink now through 2008. 200 cases imported.

**95 pts. Vincent Girardin Clos St.-Denis 2002**

Understated at this stage, with concentrated flavors of cherry, plum, licorice and pepper displayed on the dense, rich texture. Picks up nuance after nuance, with a long oak-spice finish. Best from 2010 through 2025. 25 cases imported.

**95 pts. Dominique Laurent Clos de la Roche 2002**

Gentle for this appellation, nonetheless revealing density, with plenty of sweet oak spice surrounding a core of black cherry and licorice flavors. Builds and builds on the palate to an expansive, oak-tinged finish. Best from 2012 through 2025.

**93 pts. Jean-Claude Boisset Clos de la Roche 2002**

Concentrated flavors of morello cherry, mineral, smoke and spice ride dense tannins and a chewy texture to a long finish. Lean and well-muscled yet balanced and appealing, it needs time to tame the tannins. Best from 2007 through 2014. 60 cases made.

**93 pts. Vincent Girardin Clos de la Roche Vieilles Vignes 2002**

Deceptive. Forward and attractive now, but beyond the initial black cherry, forest underbrush and spice notes lies a brooding, mineral-infused red, smoldering with power and plenty in reserve. Best from 2009 through 2020. 140 cases imported.

**88 pts. Dujac Morey St.-Denis 2002**

A ripe, burly style, but makes up for it in exuberance and concentration. Shows sweet fruit, with a long licorice and leather aftertaste. Best from 2007 through 2012.

**91 pts. Dominique Laurent Nuits-St.-Georges Les Pruliers 2002**

Sumptuous yet with a firm underlying structure, offering cherry and berry flavors set against a raw-silk texture. Very pure, concentrated and harmonious, with just a few rough edges that will smooth out with time. Best from 2007 through 2015.

**88 pts. Mongeard-Mugneret Vosne-Romanee Les Orveaux 2002**

Pushes the edge of both ripeness and flavor, with animal and vegetable notes and mineral and spice accents. Manages to stay in bounds, with a firm, dense structure. Best from 2007 through 2012. 120 cases imported.

**95 pts. Mongeard-Mugneret Clos de Vougeot 2002**

Bold aromas and flavors of cherry, coffee and spice prevail through the midpalate, then shut down quickly as the stiff structure emerges. Young, monolithic and backward, with dense fruit and a long vibrant finish. Best from 2012 through 2025. 65 cases imported.

Italy

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**93 pts. Castello Banfi Brunello di Montalcino Poggio alle Mura 2000**

Impressive nose for the vintage, with loads of ripe fruit and beautiful flowers. Full-bodied and very velvety, with beautiful tannins. I love this. Best after 2006. 8,000 cases made.

**90 pts. Caparzo Brunello di Montalcino La Casa 2000**

Fresh and very perfumed, with roses, fresh raspberries and cedar. Full-bodied, with a solid midpalate of fruit and a silky, caressing finish. Fine for the vintage. Best after 2005. 100 cases imported.

**90 pts. Poggio Antico Brunello di Montalcino Altero 2000**

Intense aromas of ripe plum-almost pruny-and dried flowers. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a pretty finish. Delicious already. Really well done. Best after 2005. 1,680 cases made.

**88 pts. Poggio Antico Brunello di Montalcino 2000**

Very ripe plum-almost pruny-character. Medium-to full-bodied, with fine tannins and a medium finish. Caressing texture. Slightly hollow mid-palate. Best after 2005. 4,280 cases made.