

**THE GREAT WINE SEMINAR 2004**

**“A STUDY IN RICHEBOURG”**

*Presented by Roger C. Bohmrich MW*

**Background** – Le Richebourg comes from *climats* identified as Les Richebourgs (5.03 hectares/12.4 acres) and Les Véroilles ou Richebourgs (3 ha/7.4 acres). Domaine de la Romanée Conti owns half of the combined vineyard and ten other growers share the balance. Les Richebourgs touches Romanée-Saint-Vivant to the east and both La Romanée and La Romanée-Conti to the south, and tends to ripen slightly before Les Véroilles. Situated on mid-slope at between 852 and 918 feet, this vineyard sits on very thin, pebbly clay and sand over a base of Bathonian Prémieux rock. There is on average a total of about 2,400 and 2,700 9-liter cases of Richebourg each vintage.

**Historical details** – Le Richebourg in the singular is the wine emanating from the vineyards and was first cited in 1512. It owes its fame to the Cistercians of the Abbey of Cîteaux. Dr. Morelot in 1831 wrote that Richebourg was less exquisite than La Romanée due to its position on the rise of the slope. André Jullien put Richebourg at the top of the *première classe*, saying it differed from Romanée-Conti in that it was more deeply colored and less fine. Dr. Jules Lavalley's 1855 classification placed Les Richebourgs as a *tête de cuvée* along with La Romanée-Conti, La Romanée, and La Tâche. He ranked Les Véroilles one step lower as a *première cuvée*, equal to Gaudichots, La Grande Rue, Suchots and Malconsorts. In the 1920s, a tribunal agreed that the contiguous Les Véroilles et Richebourgs could produce Richebourg, and this judgment was carried over to the A.O.C. legislation in 1936. These complicated stories are part of Burgundian lore!

**A word about the Gros family estates**

Fragmentation of the original estate of Louis Gros in 1963 resulted in the creation of four distinct Gros wine properties:

- Domaine Jean Gros: last run by Madame Gros and son Michel, who created his own estate. In 1996, the J Gros label was eliminated and the holdings disbursed.
- Domaine Gros Frère et Soeur: at first looked after by Gustave and Colette Gros, then nephew Bernard. Owns .6 ha of Les Véroilles.

## Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

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- Domaine Anne-Françoise Gros (labeled A.-F. Gros: the daughter of Jean Gros. Owns a combined .69 ha of Richebourg parcels.
- Domaine Anne et François Gros (Domaine Anne Gros after 1994): François was the brother of Jean Gros. Daughter Anne took control in 1988. Owns .6 ha of Les Véroilles.

### **Jean Gros 1995 \*\*\*\*(+)**

*To the eye, moderately dense ruby brick with faint brown. The nose offers red berries and dried spices and is still holding back. The palate is focused and fresh with a lovely flourish of acidity. Already exceptionally long and perfumed finale. A wine in the first phase of development. Keep to 2010-2014.*

### **Gros Frère et Soeur 1995 \*\*\*(\*)**

*Dark ruby and less developed than the J Gros '95. The aroma is broad and deep, revealing red cherry and a hint of tar. In the mouth, the wine is youthful and reserved. There is substance and solidity, but the wine is not expressive at this stage. 2013-2016.*

### **Leroy 1991 \*\*\*\*(+)**

*Nearly dense, youthful dark ruby. Rich and layered aroma with restrained power. Hints of tobacco and licorice. The palate is muscular and still barely evolved. Concentrated fruit backed by a relatively firm structure. Opens slowly in the finish. 2012-2015.*

### **Anne et François Gros 1990 \*\*\*\*(\*)**

*Very dark ruby with slight evolution. Rich, sweet, almost exotic nose dominated by youthful fruit and a coffee note. Rich and fat in the mouth, offering superbly ripe, healthy fruit. Rounded, graceful and still closed in the finish. Great potential. 2015-2018.*

### **Gros Frère et Soeur 1990 \*\*\*(\*)**

*Dense dark ruby. Ripe though reserved aroma revealing wild red fruits and a touch of black pepper. Much more expressive in the mouth. Ripe, pure fruit and ripe acidity. Very complex finish, already long and lovely. 2008-2012.*

### **Domaine de la Romanée-Conti 1990 \*\*\*\*(\*)**

*Moderately dense dark brick red. Very fragrant, nuanced nose exhibiting vanilla, spice and a compote of red berries. Great presence on the palate. Surprisingly accessible. Evident ripeness and weight. Subtle leather and vanilla accents in the aftertaste with a very faint vegetal note. An individual, multi-faceted example. 2015-2018.*

### **Jean Grivot 1988 \*\*\*(?)**

*Moderately dense dark garnet. Somewhat flat nose lacking purity. Has concentration but is angular with dry, bitter tannins. May soften with time. 2006-2008?.*

### **Méo-Camuzet 1988 \*\*\***

*Paling tawny with red cast. Low intensity aroma with suggestion of smoked meat. Hard on the palate: lacks flesh and charm. A doubtful future.*

### **Leroy 1988 \*\*\*\***

*Dark ruby brick. Notable concentration to the nose with wild red fruits, leather and cedar. An immediate incisive impression: the acidity and tannin conceal the concentrated core. Certainly demands further softening. Too austere for many palates, but excellent long-term potential. 2010-2014.*

### **Jean Gros 1985 \*\*\*\*+**

*Maturing dark brick with tawny at rim. Ripe, warm, very Pinot (beetroot), subtle and inflected. Ripe and seductive, spicy taste. Lovely texture and fresh acidity for an '85. The finish is developing. 2008-2012.*

### **Domaine de la Romanée-Conti 1985 \*\*\*\*+**

*To the eye, a brick-tawny cast with a red eye. The bouquet exhibits maturing characteristics emphasizing warm, baked notes along with spice and leather. On the palate, the wine is captivating and evolving. Smooth, complex, seductive. Drink now-2006.*

**Domaine de la Romanée-Conti 1971 \*\*\*\*+**

*Paling tawny mahogany – the color of a mature Burgundy. Low-toned, evolved bouquet with a gentle warmth and spice. The palate is harmonious, warm and leathery. A touch of dry tannin still remains, suggesting further development. For many attending, the best wine of the tasting. Drink now-2006.*

**Domaine de la Romanée-Conti 1961 \*\*\*\*+**

*Light, paling tawny. Very subdued aroma with a suggestion of warmth and its original substance. Fading on the palate, yet has all the sensual appeal of a fully mature Burgundy. A delicate sweetness adds to the silky texture. Shows its class. Likely to decline with further age.*