

OLIVIER BERNSTEIN

PREMIERS & GRANDS CRUS

From Mozart to Great Wines

Born in Touraine to a family where good taste, a sense of nuance and a flair for performance and being different have always been strong values, Olivier Bernstein was surrounded by classical music while growing up. Bernstein's grandfather founded the music publishing house, Bärenreiter, which is the industry standard for works by Mozart, Bach, Schubert and Haydn. His parents directed publication of several major classical music labels that are the sine qua non for the most demanding music lovers.

Bernstein himself was in the midst of a career in international management with the TGV, traveling the world for the rail industry, when "the culture of taste" in which he had been raised eventually caught up with him. Wherever he found himself – Asia, North America, South America, Europe – wine was the connection to his homeland and a burgeoning passion. He devoted his free time to exploring vineyards, meeting vintners, working the harvests and taking part in winemaking. Finally, realizing his life was about to change trajectory, he obtained a degree in viticulture and oenology in Beaune.

Winemaking becomes a Profession

In 2002, at the age of 35, Bernstein realized his dream of becoming a winemaker. He purchased an abandoned Mas (literally, "farmhouse") and selected eight hectares (19.77 acres) of old vines in Roussillon in the south of France. To create his Mas de la Devèze, Bernstein bought a tractor and did all the work himself, learning by doing. His small production delighted some of France's finest restaurants – Pierre Gagnaire, Marc Veyrat, Lasserre, Le Meurice, Taillevent, Ledoyen, Le Crillon – and sold out quickly. Working through good importers, Le Mas de la Devèze swiftly established itself across five continents. Bernstein spent the next five years perfecting his methods in his new profession – vigneron. He remains devoted to the values that the Bernstein family considers essential: hard work, unrelenting rigor and creativity.



"To have become a winemaker through choice rather than because of familial expectation is a distinctive – and liberating – position to be in," says Olivier Bernstein, whose passion led him to a complete career change and new life in the vineyards.

Returning to his First Love: Burgundy

The desire to once again work with Pinot Noir was too strong to resist. Olivier Bernstein had never forgotten his brief stint with Henri Jayer during the vinification of the 2002 vintage. His considerable knowledge of Burgundy and the winemakers there – during the past ten years he has regularly tasted at such prestigious estates as Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Bernard Dugat-Py, Armand Rousseau, Emmanuel Rouget, G. Roumier, Anne Gros, Jean François Coche-Dury, Jean Marie Raveneau – enabled Bernstein to return to his first love: Burgundy.



Returning to Burgundy (cont.)

In 2007 Bernstein created the négociant house which bears his name and produces very small quantities of very high quality Premiers and Grands Crus exclusively. Bernstein works closely with select growers of very old vines; he and his team manage the viticulture in each climat. In 2012 he was able to purchase – a wonderful opportunity and rare occurrence in Burgundy – in Mazis-Chambertin Grand Cru and Gevrey-Chambertin Premier Cru “Les Champeaux,” the vines with



The Very Best Grapes Possible

“Viticulture is the very basis of everything. We cultivate selected plots of old vines (40-years of age or more) and truly very old vines (60- to 80-years-old) that are naturally balanced and give small yields. To get grapes of excellent quality and perfect health, the work in the vineyard is absolutely fundamental – and unstinting. Aerating the rootstock, trimming the leaf canopy, green harvesting, fall harvest at perfect maturity using small trays (*les caissettes*), selection of only perfectly healthy grapes – these are some of the techniques which aim at a single objective – to obtain the very best grapes possible. Through this work, we hope to eliminate all the grapes at risk of not attaining sufficient phenolic maturity, and at the same time, those whose condition of health would not be optimum. The elimination of these grapes in the months preceding harvest is a precondition for obtaining wines that are pure and balanced. For us, the work is done in the vineyards. It is impossible to make a great wine without a great grape,” affirms Bernstein.

Bernstein’s seven Grands Crus and three Premiers Crus have a wealth of old vines, which are fundamental to the quality of his wines. All the Bernstein vineyard plots, save one, are at least 40-years-old; most are between 60- and 80-years-old. While officially acting with négociant status, Olivier and his team take responsibility for the vineyard work on their plots, avoiding chemical treatments, adhering to “*lutte raisonnée*” or reasoned intervention only when necessary. Grass grows between the vines to reduce rainwater saturation and encourage soil microbial health. The team passes through the vineyards at the time of the veraison to thin out any bunches which do not meet Bernstein’s rigorous quality requirements. This enables him to pick healthy grapes at optimum ripeness and good phenolic maturity.

The Magic of Winemaking and Barrel Aging

“Next the grapes are sorted a second time in my winery in Gevrey-Chambertin in order to eliminate any undesirable ones that made it through the first sorting. Vinification is gentle so that the delicacy of the Pinot Noir is respected.

“The making of each wine is adapted to the vintage, the crus and the quality of the grapes. Our cellars, located in Beaune at 4 rue Jean Belin, are where the wines are aged in new oak barrels from the Bercay forest (Jupilles), made by master cooper Stéphane Chassin, who comes to taste the new vintage before deciding what type of toast will suit each individual wine. (The premier and grand cru wines are matured in new wood from the start.) When they are ready, our wines are bottled by hand, without filtration or fining, bottle by bottle, cru by cru.”



“Then there is the magical part, totally intuitive and personal, which shapes and defines the wine. Each vintage is unique, and the choices – such as the date of harvest, type of vinification, length of time in the barrel – all contribute to finishing and personalizing the wine.”

– Olivier Bernstein

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