



Postcard from Chablis: The 2018s & 2017s (January 2020)

featuring Samuel Billaud

by Antonio Galloni

Samuel Billaud

This was my first tasting with Samuel Billaud in his new winery. Billaud has done a tremendous job in building out his range since he struck out on his own some years ago. What I find most compelling about these wines is how they balance textural richness with energy. That is not so surprising in 2017, as the style of the year leans towards freshness, but it was much harder to achieve in 2018. Unfortunately, I was not able to taste the 2018 Grand Crus, as they were still fermenting at the time of my visit.

2018 Chablis Mont de Milieu 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Mont de Milieu 1er Cru is one of the stand outs in this range. Ample and creamy, the 2018 is so wonderfully inviting, even in the early going. All the elements just come together effortlessly. Orchard fruit, citrus confit, spice, wild flowers and a touch of new oak all grace this super-expressive Chablis. The 2018 was done 80% in tank and 20% in a 450-liter oak barrel. **(92-94 points)**

2018 Chablis Séchet 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Séchet 1er Cru is creamy and resonant in the glass, with striking textural richness and tons of sheer character. A whole range of mineral and soil-driven inflections give the Séchet much of its distinctive character. Graphite, smoke, and earthy notes linger on the finish. More than anything else, the Séchet is a wine of real substance. **(92-94 points)**

2018 Chablis Vaillons Vieilles Vignes 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Vaillons Vieilles Vignes 1er Cru is shaping up to be a real beauty. Powerful and resonant in the glass, the 2018 is racy, ample and so expressive. Orchard

fruit, almond and dried flowers are some of the many aromas and flavors that develop in the glass. Readers will find a powerful, virile Chablis endowed with richness and structure to burn. I can't wait to taste it from bottle. **(92-94 points)**

2018 Chablis Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru

In 2018, the Chablis Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru comes across as quite airy and lifted. The tell-tale citrus peel, flora, mint and crushed rock notes are there, but the 2018 is decidedly weightless in feel. I also see a bit less energy than is the norm, but then again, this is 2018 we are talking about. The Montée de Tonnerre is a blend of fruit from two parcels measuring just 0.60 hectares in total. **(91-93 points)**

2018 Chablis Butteaux 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Butteaux 1er Cru is tightly wound and full of energy, which make it hard to taste today, but are probably good for the future. Slate, dried pear, mint and mineral notes abound. The question is really whether or not the 2018 will show more flesh from bottle. Today, it is a bit airy, but quite enticing just the same. **(91-93 points)**

2018 Chablis Les Fourneaux 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Les Fourneaux 1er Cru is one of the more voluptuous wines in this range. Lemon confit, almond, and dried flowers are some of the nuances that build in a Chablis that offers quite bit of creamy resonance but plenty of energy as well. I imagine it will drink well with minimal cellaring. **(90-92 points)**

2018 Chablis Montmains 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Montmains 1er Cru is delicate and open-knit, with pretty floral overtones that add lift. Orchard fruit, wild flowers and light tropical accents all grace this mid-weight, creamy Chablis. Soft contours and impeccable balance add to its considerable charms. **(90-92 points)**

2018 Chablis Fourchaume 1er Cru

The 2018 Chablis Fourchaume 1er Cru is delicate and understated, which will likely make it easy to drink pretty much upon release. Soft contours and gentle, layered personality add to a real feeling of immediacy. It will be interesting to see how the 2018 ultimately shows from bottle. Today, it is very much a Chablis of reserve. **(90-92 points)**

2018 Chablis AC

The 2018 Chablis is silky, nuanced and light on its feet, with lovely textural richness and tons of pure class. Lemon peel, white flowers, mint and crushed rocks are all finely delineated. Here, too, readers will find a wine done in a nervy style for the year. **(89-90 points)**

2018 Petit Chablis

Billaud's 2018 Petit Chablis offers lovely depth and textural richness at this level, all

while maintaining a good bit of freshness as well. Lemon confit and lifted floral notes add a good bit of energy. I very much like the wine's tension and verve, both of which are unusual in 2018. **(87-89 points)**

2018 Bourgogne d'Or

The 2018 Bourgogne d'Or is a very pretty, entry-level wine in this range. Bright floral and citrus flavors, along with soft contours, make the Bourgogne d'Or an excellent choice for drinking now and over the next few years. This is an especially airy, chiseled style. **(87-88 points)**

2017 Chablis Les Clos Grand Cru

A tiny bottling in this range, the 2017 Chablis Les Clos Grand Cru comes from a microscopic parcel measuring a measly 0.08 hectares, which yielded enough to fill a single 228-liter barrel. Dense, rich and concentrated, the Clos is a wine of real distinction and class. Floral, spice and citrus oil accents are some of the many notes that are woven together in a racy, powerful Chablis endowed with tremendous personality and class. **(96 points)**

2017 Chablis Blanchot Grand Cru

The 2017 Chablis Blanchot Grand Cru is another rock star wine. Powerful and explosive, with tons of underlying saline energy, the Blanchot is a mind-bendingly beautiful Chablis endowed with tons of character. Exotic floral notes add striking shades of nuance, but it is the wholeness of the Blanchot that stands out most. **(96 points)**

2017 Chablis Bougros Grand Cru

The 2017 Chablis Bougros Grand Cru is a terrific example of just how compelling this vintage is at the top end. Weightless and classically austere, the Bougros offers so much intensity, but in the understated manner that is so typical of first-rate Chablis. Soaring citrus, floral and mineral-infused aromatics add to the wine's sheer appeal. Aging in larger format oak really helps the wine preserve freshness. **(96 points)**

2017 Chablis Vaudésir Grand Cru

From a tiny parcel measuring just 0.3 hectares, the 2017 Chablis Vaudésir Grand Cru is broad, creamy and ample in feel. Orange confit, spice, dried flowers, apricot and a kiss of new oak shape this super-expressive, racy Chablis. The 2017 was done in a single 450-liter barrel. **(95 points)**

2017 Chablis Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru

One of the highlights in this range, the 2017 Chablis Montée de Tonnerre 1er Cru captures all of the energy and tension that makes wines from this site so distinctive. White flowers, mint, crushed rocks, slate and citrus all pulse through the 2017. The style is all about classical austerity, translucence and crystalline purity. **(95 points)**

2017 Chablis Les Preuses Grand Cru

The 2017 Chablis Les Preuses Grand Cru is another super-expressive wine in this lineup from Samuel Billaud. It has terrific salinity and energy, if a bit less dimension and texture than the very best wines in the range. In this tasting, it comes across as a mini version of what this cru is tends to express. **(94 points)**

2017 Chablis Mont de Milieu 1er Cru

The 2017 Chablis Mont de Milieu 1er Cru is an absolutely exquisite rendering of this site. Rich, layered and beautifully resonant in the glass, the 2017 possesses tons of depth, energy and complexity. Dried pear, marzipan, lemon confit, spice, petrol, dried flowers and chamomile are some of the many notes that grace this wonderfully inviting Chablis from Samuel Billaud. **(94 points)**

2017 Chablis Séchet 1er Cru

The 2017 Chablis Séchet 1er Cru is a wonderfully complete wine that brings together a brilliant, crystalline expression of fruit with weightless energy and understated depth. A Chablis of tension and nuance, the Séchet offers terrific balance as well as appeal. Everything is just so vivid here. **(94 points)**

2017 Chablis Les Fourneaux 1er Cru

The 2017 Chablis Les Fourneaux 1er Cru is a wine of textural breadth more than anything else. Although not as elegant nor as refined as some of the other wines in the range, the Fourneaux is beautifully rich and resonant in the glass. Orange peel, spice, marzipan and coffee add nuance as this oily, expressive Chablis shows off its racy personality. **(92 points)**

2017 Chablis Montmains 1er Cru

The 2017 Chablis Montmains 1er Cru is forward, open-knit and very easy to enjoy. Passionfruit, mango, white flowers and mint all grace this silky, sumptuous 1er Cru from Samuel Billaud. Soft contours, forward fruit and the energy of the year all meld together in a wonderfully complete and delicious Chablis from Samuel Billaud. **(92 points)**

2017 Chablis Vaillons Vieilles Vignes 1er Cru

The 2017 Chablis Vaillons Vieilles Vignes 1er Cru is another super-appealing wine in this lineup. Floral overtones work so well to play off the natural richness these old vines confer. White flowers, mint and tropical fruit infuse the 2017 with notable complexity and layers of flavor. In the 2017, the Vaillons Vieilles Vignes is a Chablis of pure and total sensuality. **(92 points)**

