



WINERY PROFILE: HENRI de VILLAMONT

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



When I travel in the winemaking areas of the world, I'm always on the lookout for value. Over the last couple of years, I have visited Henri de Villamont three times while tasting through their range in several vintages.

On my last visit, I had three other Spec's employees with me. All of them concurred in my decision to buy and feature Villamont's wines in Spec's stores. I'd like to take credit for discovering the new Henri de Villamont wines but the fact is that Eric Fourault, one of the brokers we work with in France, pestered me into stopping there. I finally made my first appointment there more to get Eric off my back than to find a new Burgundy supplier. The wines were so good that I was quite pleasantly surprised. Here's a bit of background on Henri de Villamont followed by my notes on the current vintages.

The Lord of Villamont was a gentleman originally from Brittany who was made a knight of the Order of Jerusalem. As a knight and crusader, he was a great traveller at the end of the 16th century and into the 17th. Centuries whose adventures are recorded in three books named *Les Voyages du Seigneur de Villamont* (edited in 1607). At the end of his travels, Villamont settled in Savigny-lès-Beaune, a village in Burgundy's Cote de Beaune whose vineyards used to be partly owned by the Order of Jerusalem between 1256 and 1655. Toward the end of the 19th century, Léonce Bocquet (more on whom in a future article), then the sole owner of the famous Clos de Vougeot, decided to build a modern winemaking and wine aging facilities. He settled on Savigny-lès-Beaune as an ideal location and engaged famed architect Albert Suisse to design and construct the buildings. This development ran from 1880 to 1888. The outcome was a spectacular winery and cellars with 4000 covered square meters, six meters high vaults, a capacity of 4000 barrels (of 228 liters each) and a heating system to initiate the malolactic fermentation.

In 1964, the Schenk Group bought the Villamont estate along with various vineyards up and down the Cote d'Or. While Schenk initially did well with the property, the reputation and quality began to sink. By the 1970s, Villamont was no longer thought of as a quality producer.

Beginning in 2005 when Schenk appointed Pierre Jhean as president and winemaker of Henri de Villamont, the house's reputation began to turn around. Jhean has modernized much of the processes and made the winery and the wines cleaner and fresher. Farming has been improved and yields reduced to the point that now Villamont represents some of the best values in Burgundy. Quality is excellent and made better by the



reasonable prices. If you are more concerned about flavor and quality than having a label with a fancy reputation, try these freshly arrived Villamont wines.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Bourgogne Pinot Noir Prestige, 2009

12x750ML \$14.39 \$161.04

Tech Note: 12.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-downs. Aged 12 months in 60% tank 40% oak barrels (20% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity, medium phenolics. Fresh and focused with tart red cherry fruit and some earth. Fits together, integrated, of a piece. Classic basic Bourgogne Pinot. Easy to like. Spec's Score: 87.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Chambolle Musigny, 2008

12x750ML \$42.74 \$481.51

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir from the domaine vineyards near Morey on the north end of the village fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 13 months in all French oak barrels (35% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Perfumed with sweet red fruit. Lovely texture with cola and black pepper. Alive-in-the-mouth. Quite tasty. Spec's Score: 91.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Chambolle Musigny Grosseilles 1er Cru, 2009

12x750ML \$62.69 \$707.70

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir from the domaine fermented using open tops and punch-downs. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels (50% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Supple, delicious, sweet and perfumed red fruit. Yum. Rich and rounded in the mouth but still fresh. Really pretty. Quite succulent. Les Grosseilles is located in a nice spot on the slope below and just north of the village. Spec's Score: 93+.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Grands Echezeaux 2007

12x750ML \$137.49 \$1547.74

Tech Note: 14% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops and punch-downs and aged 16 months in all French oak (70% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Supple and rich with dark red and some black cherry fruit. Supple, integrated earth and oak. Lovely-in-the-mouth, rich and delicious. Spec's Score: 94+.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Nuits St Georges Murgers 1er Cru 2009

12x750ML \$69.99 \$788.22

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops, punch-down aged 14 months in French oak barrels (40% new). Darker red in color with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and medium firm phenolics. Big earth and oak nose. Dark red and some black cherry fruit. Very rich. Almost Vosne Romanee both in style and in location. Delicious, supple, succulent. Spec's Score: 95.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Pommard Les Rugiens 1er Cru 2008

12x750ML \$57.39 \$645.48

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops and punch-downs and aged 12 months in all 2nd use barrels. Red in color with well-formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity, chewy phenolics. Supple, rich, soft Pommard with lots of dark red and some black juice. Delicious, complete. Hints at rustic and has a subtle power about it. Rugien is up the slope on the south side of the village. Spec's Score: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Santenay Les Champs Claude, 2008
12x750ML \$23.74 \$268.06

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-downs. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels (20% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Rich and focused with riper cherry fruit accented with minerals and subtle earth and a hint of dusty oak. Delicious, focused, alive-in-the-mouth. Spec's Score: 90.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Savigny Clos Des Guettes 1er Cru 2009
12x750ML \$31.99 \$361.61

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir from the domaine fermented using open tops with punch-down and aged in all French oak barrels (40% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Rich and supple. Lovely feel. Dark ripe red and even some black cherry fruit accented with cola and mineral earth. Delicious. Complete and well integrated. The Clos des Guettes 1er cru is a monopole (one owner vineyard of Villamont) although they do sell some grapes to Louis Jadot. Spec's Score: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Volnay Le Ronceret 1er Cru 2007
12x750ML \$44.64 \$504.49

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-down aged 13 months in all French oak barrels (30% new). Red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Supple, rich, spicy. Dark red cherry fruit. Sneaky. Rounded, supple, integrated and complete. Ronceret is midway across the village at the bottom of the 1er cru slope. There is a bit more soil here (as opposed to all rock) which allows this wine to show some welcome richness. Great value for a volnay 1er cru. Spec's Score: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Bourgogne Chardonnay Millenaire 2009
12x750ML \$18.89 \$212.28

Tech Note: 12.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay, all from in and around Meursault barrel-fermented using all French oak barrels (100% new with light toast). Straw in color, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Rich and supple with new oak. Ripe fruit. Well selected. Succulent and even sexy. Wow. Still, it holds up in the glass. Delicious ... succulent ... supple ... rounded; lovely-in-the-mouth. Bear Note: This "Millenaire" is Villamont's "fancy" Bourgogne Blanc. Spec's Score: 91+.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Bourgogne Chardonnay Prestige 2008
12x750ML \$14.39 \$161.04

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay (40% Meursault and 60% Macon) 60% tank fermented and 40% barrel-fermented (20% new) French barrels). Straw in color, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity, very light phenolics. Lovely mineral and fruit Bourgogne with enough oak and terroir richness to set it apart. Delicious with citrus and minerals. Shockingly good for the price. Spec's Score: 90+++.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Chablis Vaudesir Grand Cru 2008
12x750ML \$60.79 \$686.76

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 10 months in all French oak barrels (25% new). Pale straw-gold in color with green highlights, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium full-bodied with very fresh acidity. A real hange of pace. Pure chalky mineral with earth and spice. Pure but ripe lemon fruit. Elegant and tightly focused but bursting with flavor. The oak is completely integrated. Delicious ... elegant ... even ethereal. Spec's Score: 93+.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Chassagne Montrachet 2009
12x750ML \$44.99 \$505.81

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay from above the quarry barrel-fermented and aged 12 months in French oak barrels (20% new). Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Lots of Mineral. Big but almost Puligny in style. Elegant and ripe. Lovely Chassagne. Lots of ripe Meyer lemon and a bit of lime. Delicious. Picks up some mushroomy earth and oak at the end. Ripe, delicious, lovely-in-the-mouth. Spec's Score: 92+.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Meursault Les Caillerets 1er Cru 2007
12x750ML \$63.59 \$715.31

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 14 months in (30% new). Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. This is big, rich Meursault. Lovely feel. California meets the Cote d'Or but the cote dominates. Mineral and really ripe lemon plus more citrus. Note of Mushroomy earth. This is Cote d'Or Chardonnay for fish. Elegant but somehow still a bit rustic. "Caillerets" is actually north past Meusault in the Volnay appellation but legally sold as Meursault. Spec's Score: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Meursault Les Clous 2009
12x750ML \$44.59 \$502.01

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented. Straw in color, bright and clear with fine legs; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. Rich and alive. Classic Meursault. Delicious, supple Chardonnay. Ripe citrus and great mineral notes. Elegant, delicious, complete, alive-in-the-mouth; even vibrant. Excellent. Spec's Score: 93.



HENRI de VILLAMONT Montagny les Bassets 1er Cru 2008

12x750ML \$25.64 \$288.55

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 8 months in oak barrels (all French, 30% new). Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Supple, elegant Montagny masquerading as Puligny. Lots of mineral and elegance Citrus and subtle oak. Focused ... refreshing ... lovely-in-the-mouth. BS: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Puligny Montrachet 2008

12x750ML \$41.39 \$466.14

Tech Note: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 11 months in 20% new French oak barrels. Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Fresh and elegant with lots of mineral and lots of fresh citrus. Hints at tropical but the citrus and mineral rule. The oak is completely integrated. Elegant and Delicious. BS: 92.

HENRI de VILLAMONT Pouilly Fuisse Grumes D'or 2007

12x750ML \$25.19 \$283.43

Tech Note: 13% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay, barrel-fermented and aged 8 months in all 350 liter (rather than the standard 225 liter) oak barrels (all French; 30% new). Gold-straw in color, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Rich supple, almost California-style Pouilly. If you like great high end Cal Chard, you will like this. Succulent, supple, delicious. Ripe citrus and tropical fruit, supple oak and minerally mushroomy earth. Complete, rich, lovely-in-the-mouth. BS: 92+.

