

Your Next Lesson: Aligoté

By ERIC ASIMOV



The leading white grape in Burgundy is, of course, chardonnay. However, another white grape is also grown there, though it is not nearly so highly regarded.

That would be aligoté, a grape struggling to shake its bad reputation — pervasively believed to be thin, acidic and good for little else beyond serving as a base for kir, an aperitif in which white wine is blended with crème de cassis. This month, I hope, we will instead see the greater potential of the grape is by drinking some very good aligotés.

I have become a proponent of aligoté, something I share with some of Burgundy's biggest names, who continue to produce aligoté even though they could probably make more money by replacing the vines with chardonnay.

Why do they stick with it? It's part of Burgundian tradition. Many producers see continuing to produce aligoté as a way of honoring their heritage. That, and they like it.

Some believe it is essentially an easygoing knock-back wine, refreshing, very good with seafood, but little more than that. Others, like Sylvain Pataille of Marsannay, contend that aligoté is every bit as capable as chardonnay of showing the intricacies of Burgundian terroir.

In either case, it is another expression of Burgundy, and quite a bit more economical than, say, Meursault. Here are the three bottles I recommend:

Paul Pernot et ses Fils Bourgogne Aligoté 2016 (Jeanne-Marie de Champs/Summit Selections, Staten Island, N.Y.) \$22

Michel Lafarge Bourgogne Aligoté Raisins Dorés 2015 (Becky Wasserman/Frederick Wildman & Sons, New York) \$28

A. & P. de Villaine Bouzeron 2014 (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, Calif.) \$32

As usual, these wines may be in short supply, but many other good producers are available and equally worth drinking. If you can find Sylvain Pataille, snap it up. Pierre Morey, Jean-Philippe Fichet, Domaine Arlaud, Domaine Roulot, Henri Prudhon, Antoine Jobard, Claire Naudin, Alice et Olivier de Moor, Paul Pillot, Domaine d'Angerville and Sextant-Julien Altaber are all worth trying. And if you see aligoté from any other big-name Burgundy producers, try them as well.

Don't worry about vintage. For aligoté, I happen to love the 2014s, but others will do nicely.

As I said, aligoté goes brilliantly with seafood, especially shellfish and lighter, white-fleshed fish. It's also great with pastas (with white clam sauce or pesto), salads and any number of vegetable preparations.

Serve chilled but not ice-cold. And please do not add crème de cassis.

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