

Refusing to Follow the Script: Jean-Marie Guffens

BY NEAL MARTIN | FEBRUARY 18, 2020

<https://v1.vinous.com/articles/refusing-to-follow-the-script-jean-marie-guffens-feb-2020>

The Cut-Price Wedding

Let me tell you two things about my nuptials. First, our entire budget was a fraction of most couples' expenditure on flowers alone because neither bride nor groom had two pennies to rub together. The catering came courtesy of supermarket Marks & Spencer, the wedding dress was sewn together by a nimble-fingered friend, and the reception was held at Leigh-on-Sea Sailing Club, in a first-floor bar with beer-dappled, threadbare carpet and Formica tables that looked funereal should a puff of cloud blemish the sky.

Second, it was one of the best weddings ever – 100 points.

Having serendipitously chosen the sunniest weekend of 2005, we were gifted a glorious vista across a yawning estuary teeming with seagulls and kamikaze kite-surfers. The DJ moved his wheels of steel onto the outside deck, which was immediately packed with friends and family linked arm in arm, wailing like strangled cats to Jefferson Starship's irresistible "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now." The M&S prawn sandwiches were wolfed down, and the congregation, sweltering in the summer heat, naturally slaked their thirst with wine. This resulted in inebriation on an epic scale. For sure, the fermented grape juice had been cheap, but boy, was it delicious. And now, today, the man who made that fermented grape juice was sitting opposite me, 14 years, 5 months and no more marriages later.

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, may I present to you the irascible, the indefatigable, the one and only Jean-Marie Guffens-Heynen.

I fell in love with Guffens' wines during the salad days of my wine career. The catalyst was a winemaker dinner at Ransom's Dock in the late 1990s. How the audience gasped at the unrepeatably anecdotes and the spray-graffiti of expletives! Guffens has always been a walking, talking exclamation point. But playing the *enfant terrible* makes you look a fool if not backed up with wines that deliver.

Guffens's wines do not deliver. No, they *over-deliver*. They represent some of the best value-for-money wines not just in Burgundy, but in France.

I have vague recollections of visiting Guffens' winery in Vergisson many moons ago; subsequently, I tasted and reviewed his new releases regularly. But it had been eons since I sat down with Guffens himself or tasted mature bottles. I got the chance to do both when Farr Vintners, his UK distributor, hosted an unprecedented retrospective that spanned three decades. It included mature bottles both from his domaine and under the label of Maison Verget, his négociant arm founded in 1990 to cater for his growing ambitions, as well as verticals of cuvées chosen by Guffens, his forays into Chablis and the Côte d'Or, and his one-off tribute to a certain band that wisely changed their name from The Screaming Abdabs. What kind of Guffens we would meet? On the sliding scale of good to bad behavior, how bad would he be?



Guffens, looking as if he is about to launch into a Nigel Farage impersonation.

That Crazy Belgian (Roy Batty Blues)

It's good to see him again. He's exactly as I remember. His curls are greyer and his cheeks ruddier, his mischievous face spelling T.R.O.U.B.L.E. Yet I find him, as ever, congenial and garrulous. Though typically he plays it cool,

underneath I sense he is looking forward to this showcase, and to giving his two cents about the wines and anything else that erupts from his mind.

The first salvo is unleashed while I am still getting comfortable in my chair: “My problem is that when I get drunk I say what I mean, and when I get very drunk, I say what I don’t mean.” At the moment, Guffens is *not* drunk. Or at least I don’t think he is. Maybe he had a cheeky sharpener? You can never tell. Today he is clearly going to say what he means.

Guffens’s rise has been well documented over the years, and was propelled in no small part by the man from Monkton. “In 1983 the importer Peter Vezan presented my 1982s to Robert Parker,” he recalled. “Parker wrote about a ‘crazy Belgian’ who makes Mâcon as good as Puligny-Montrachet. I wrote him a letter and I told him that I wasn’t pleased. Two weeks later he came to my home, and I told him: ‘Do you know how much rubbish is made in Puligny? I don’t need a standard.’”

I am intrigued how Guffens became a winemaker. Unaware of any family heritage, I always presumed happenstance; I only knew that in 1976 he and his wife Maine, also attending this tasting, relocated to France. At lunch I caught him alone for a moment and inquired. After an uncharacteristic pause, he replied: “I wanted to be an actor or an architect. My acting teacher was the mother of Rutger Hauer...” Presumably this was in Amsterdam. “I remember that I was playing Chekhov. My teacher told me that I would be no good as an actor. She told me that actors are stupid because they just follow their lines and that I didn’t. She said that I needed to be my own man. So I joined the army to do my national service, but got kicked out within three hours for exhibitionism. I spoke several languages except French, so I decided to spend a year in France, and I never came back.”

I mused upon this revelation, this tenuous link between sci-fi classic *Blade Runner* and Jean-Marie Guffens. Roy Batty, the replicant brilliantly played by Rutger Hauer, is the polar opposite of Guffens. Guffens’s words tumble from his mouth like an unruly mob; Batty’s every word is premeditated and enunciated with poetic eloquence. Imagine an alternate timeline where Guffens pursued his acting career and ended up in Hauer’s role, delivering the career-defining “tears in rain” monologue. Do glittering C-beams enhance photosynthesis? Is there terroir beyond the Tannhäuser Gate? Replicant Guffens would have had the answers. Replicant Guffens would have let Deckard plummet to his death rather than granting him redemption.

The 1980 and 1981 crops were sold off after the kind of malevolent growing season that pours doubt on your choice of career, so 1982 was Guffens’s first bona fide vintage, although even then he was not entirely happy because the yields were too high.



Bees in Bonnets

We broached the first flight, a vertical of **Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne** from 2013 back to 1997. This highly respected vineyard is situated on the steep slopes above the village of Pierreclos. “The first vineyard that we bought from, nobody wanted it. It was too steep and unknown,” Guffens explained. “We always took [the fruit] that other people didn’t want. It is much more enjoyable to make things that don’t exist. I can’t make great wines in, say, Meursault, because I can’t make it my way. This flight is a wine that comes from nowhere.”

Guffens seems to have a bee in his bonnet about Meursault. He mentions it two or three times in riling disposition, offering just one example of his contrarian, recalcitrant nature. Winemakers habitually covet vines grown in the most historical and prestigious vineyards, but Guffens prefers to utilize less fashionable vineyards, or pull newly invented cuvées from a top hat. *Ta-da! Drink this!* Perhaps that explains why his foray into the Côte d’Or did not last. For certain, the fruit became too expensive for him to justify without increasing prices, something he is reluctant to do. But another factor was his dislike of conformity, and of playing by the rules of an anonymous authority that does not know one end of a vine from the other. Think back to the comparison Parker made to Puligny-Montrachet: it was intended as a

compliment but received as a misinterpretation of what drives Guffens. He wants to make great Mâconnais wines, not Meursault or Puligny wannabes.

Anyway, back to the Tri de Chavigne. "In some vintages it is not made, and sometimes the gap between passes through the vineyard can be up to four weeks." Indeed, Guffens is well known for his fastidious approach to picking in a region where many continue to harvest by machine. Guffens uses his own harvesters to pick the fruit when he decides it is the right time. "The Premier Cru Jus de Chavigne [made in 2003 and 2006] comes from one part of Chavigne. I had to pick it, otherwise the alcohol would have been too high."

The infamous hot summer of 2003 was not ideal for growing Chardonnay in Mâconnais. Guffens was asked about his recollections of that year. "We can't go on holiday because we are poor in Mâconnais," he answered, passing around the begging bowl, "so we are in the vineyard. [That year] we started picking on August 18 and we had finished by the end of the month. During the *canicule* [intense heat wave], the vines had no stress and the wines underwent no acidification. I'm an early picker when everyone picks late and a late picker when people pick early. Never be scared of the grapes you have. If the grapes are overripe, so be it. I prefer botrytis to dilution. Grapes do not become ripe by the sun but by botrytis."

This couldn't-give-a-toss attitude has almost become Guffens's calling card, but it belies a winemaker who, from where I am standing, *does* care. Does that mean his "rebel without a cause" shtick is an act? I don't think so. That's just the way he is. Cocky. A wind-up merchant. A provocateur. That said, the unrequited actor in Guffens *does* surface sometimes. While we were tasting his 1995 Chablis Valmur, and for reasons I fail to recall, he launched into a spot-on impression of Death in Ingmar Bergman's classic film *The Seventh Seal*. Bergman would have approved.

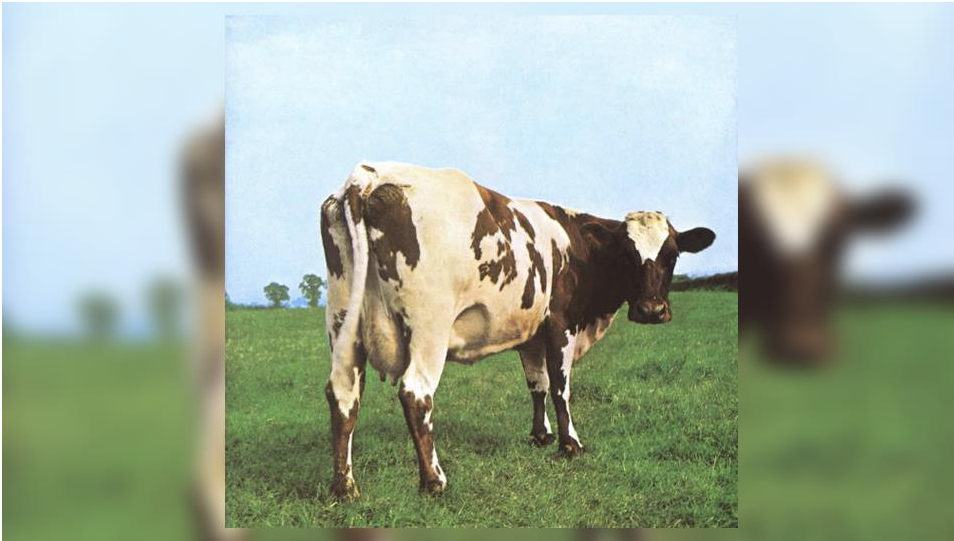
We have discussed the infamous 2003 vintage. How about a growing season that in the eyes of many produced a surfeit of great wines? Broaching his 2009 Saint-Véran Clos de Poncetys, he bluntly opined that he doesn't care for the 2009s. What does he mean? Everybody flippin' loves the 2009s! "They taste of 2009," he explained. Well, I guess they do. But Guffens seeks to express the patch of dirt where his vines come from and dislikes growing seasons that blur or erase it. (Does that not contradict the idea of just accepting the grapes that nature gives you?)

As the tasting progresses, Guffens becomes more animated and gesticulates more and more. He is in full flow. Better batten down the hatches, for his unalloyed opinions are coming thick and fast: his dislike for the money that now swills around wine, reducing it to a rich person's plaything; then a shrug of his shoulders when asked about the eagerly awaited introduction of Premier Cru Mâconnais. So what? Guffens was a close friend of the late Loire winemaker Didier Dagueneau but loathes Sauvignon Blanc. Another thing that Guffens is not keen on is the modern-day wine press. "I use a vertical press in order to keep the acidity high and the pH low. Today there are many very good presses and you don't see anything. You just press a button." He was one of the first winemakers to use ScrewCap at a time when French winemakers associated it with cheap wine, and in 2010 he commenced using Diam.

Atom Heart Mother

Can I change the subject? I'm *going* to change the subject, so bear with me.

Above the ululating playground screams and cries in the final days of the Seventies, you could hear snotty-nosed urchins chanting the earworm chorus of "Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)." "We don't need no, educa-shun/We don't need no fought [*sic*] control." It was sung with all the measly menace a nine-year-old scallywag could muster - our first act of rebellion against the education system. At that tender age, my knowledge of Pink Floyd was nonexistent beyond this chorus. I had never heard their magnum opus *The Dark Side of the Moon*, or *Atom Heart Mother*, an album whose cover art is arguably more recognized than the music itself. Guffens regards the latter as such a masterpiece that he named his 2002 Saint-Véran Terres Noires in its honor. Sadly, the label is bovine-less. "I made just one new barrel that was never commercialized," Guffens explained. "It actually comes from the *lieu-dit* of Côte-Rôtie and it contained no SO₂, which makes it one of the first natural wines. Not that this was my intention."



Ever the wine writer who delivers more information than readers know what to do with, I'll mention that Pink Floyd wanted the cover of *Atom Heart Mother* to be as mundane as possible. The Friesian was called *Lulubelle III* and the farmer tried and failed to pursue EMI for royalties. In the UK, *Atom Heart Mother* reached number one, unlike *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Check if you don't believe me.

But what inspired him to name it after that particular album? Why not *Ummagumma*?

"At the time, I felt that we are atoms and we come from our mother and this made me think of Pink Floyd," he replied. I was unsure whether anyone knew what he was talking about, but I didn't ask him to elucidate. Are any members of Pink Floyd aware of the wine's existence? David Gilmour is an oenophile when not noodling on his Fender. I once sat at the table next to his at The River Café, and I espied him choosing extremely well, so who knows? Guffens said he'd heard that drummer Nick Mason has sampled the wine. (I don't know whether Nick Mason is a wine lover, as I've never sat next to him in a restaurant.) Guffens also noted that all his other cuvées do include sulfur, but the smallest amount possible. As far as I am aware, Pink Floyd albums were all made without sulfur, though I suspect Syd Barrett might have ingested some while recording *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.

Broaching the flight of wines from the Côte d'Or, I had the sense of Guffens outside his home territory. He was on someone else's turf and he didn't like it. One continual problem was that he would sign a contract with a vineyard owner and then, after the press lauded his wine, the owner would take umbrage at someone stealing his glory and refuse to renew the contract. The selection of cuvées concentrates on banner vineyards: Corton-Charlemagne, Bâtard-Montrachet and even a Montrachet. These are well-crafted wines that showed well, and yet I cannot help feeling that they are missing the vital spark that makes Guffens's Mâconnais wines so special. Even the Montrachet is just okay; it doesn't translate into a magical crossing of Guffens and this Grand Cru. Guffens also branched out into Chablis, a region that I feel he has more affection for. (Incidentally, just before filing this piece, I happened to sit next to winemaker Patrick Piuze at a dinner in London, where Piuze told me that he was in charge of making Guffens's Chablis wines in the early 2000s.) Anyway, the good thing about scores is that they cannot lie. Therefore those that, in Guffens's own words, can "count up to one hundred," can be assured that I find many of his Mâconnais cuvées more interesting and complex than these expensive Grand Crus. Frankly, I think Guffens does too.



Some of the mature Mâconnais bottles formed the high points of this tasting.

Final Thoughts

This comprehensive tasting confirmed Jean-Marie Guffens as a winemaker *par excellence*. He has the magic touch that you cannot learn from a book. He is not averse to breaking rules and yet sometimes, even against my own expectations, his wines are simply fantastic. On the other hand, Guffens is not infallible; some wines at this tasting tripped over their shoelaces. But they were clearly in the minority, and this is all the more impressive when you consider that our purview was mature bottles that in another's hands would have fallen by the wayside. After all, we are not discussing Grand Crus, but humble Mâconnais vineyards that tend to be guzzled within a couple of years. Don't be afraid to stick a couple of them away in your cellar – you might be pleasantly surprised.



The traditional lineup of empty bottles after more than 50 wines were tasted.

Guffens never became a successful actor because he could not follow a script – and so he became a winemaker who could not follow a script. How perverse that a man with a trenchant dislike for rules ended up in a country whose wine industry is hidebound by them. His career has been spent rubbing people the wrong way, whether it is fellow winemakers, the press or business partners. The one constant throughout has been the quality of his wines. However much you might disagree with his views or smart at his opinions, you cannot argue when you take that first sip. Then factor in that these wines continue to be sold at prices that embarrass those asked for a swath of white burgundy, and – to use one of Parker's expressions – it's a no-brainer.

My nuptials proved that you don't have to spend a fortune to have a great, memorable wedding; it's about using what you've got. This is how Guffens operates. He does not need a prestigious vineyard – just give him some decent vines with decent terroir and he will turn out a delicious and occasionally profound wine. Guffens' acting teacher quickly identified his personality, rebellious nature, inability to keep still and aversion to being told what to do. Scripts are useless for Jean-Marie Guffens. Only fate could ultimately determine his career – which happened to be in wine – much to the benefit of the Mâconnais. Long may the bad boy continue making mischief.

2013 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2013 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne was picked three or four times, and some botrytis affected the fruit. The light, mulch-scented bouquet does not really lift off from the glass. The palate is sharp on the entry, offering bitter lemon and orange peel, moderate depth, and a saline, lemongrass-tinged finish. Good considering the vintage.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2026 Not Available Feb 2020

2012 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2012 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne yielded just 12hl/ha due to powdery mildew, poor flowering, oidium and so forth. It has a more resinous bouquet compared to the previous vintage, with light apple blossom and struck flint aromas gently unfolding in the glass. The palate is well balanced, delivering gentle grip and more body and weight than the 2013, and ending in a slightly honeyed, lightly spiced finish. Very fine.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2029 Not Available Feb 2020

2011 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2011 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne, which was picked extremely early according to Guffens, has a gentle, unassuming bouquet that unfolds to reveal fresh pear, dried honey and light earthy aromas. The

palate is well balanced with quite a rich, generous opening, a slightly viscous texture and notes of ginger and lemongrass toward the persistent finish. Excellent.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2010 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2010 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne has a tropical-tinged bouquet of mango and passion fruit aromas, perhaps displaying less terroir expression than the 2011 or 2012 but still utterly seductive. The palate is well balanced with a light lemon sherbet and mineral opening, and very harmonious toward the finish. This is still youthful after nine years and seems to gain edginess with aeration. I can see it improving with continued bottle age.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2032 Not Available Feb 2020

2008 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2008 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne lacked malic acid, and Guffens described it as one of his least favorite vintages. It has a toffee-tinged bouquet that misses a little definition and feels a bit past its best. The palate has a lightly spiced, quite waxy-textured opening that features lemon curd, orange pith and white chocolate, plus almond flakes toward the finish. I would drink this soon.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

2006 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos 1er Jus de Chavigne

The 2006 Mâcon-Pierreclos 1er Jus de Chavigne feels a little oxidized on the nose compared to others, displaying a nutty, flor-like scent that permeates the citrus fruit. The palate is balanced, with that same flor-like note coming through once more, offering fine weight in the mouth but missing some delineation on the finish. On my second round through the wines, this did show some improvement, although it is still not my favorite.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2024 Not Available Feb 2020

2005 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri des 25 Ans de Chavigne

The 2005 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri des 25 Ans de Chavigne has an outstanding, complex bouquet of mineral-infused citrus fruit, orange peel, honeysuckle and jasmine aromas that blossom in the glass. The palate is well balanced with a fine bead of acidity and a lovely honeyed texture. The discreetly botrytized finish fans out with style and panache. This is aging wonderfully, and it's no wonder that Guffens himself selected it as his favorite in a vertical flight.

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos 1er Jus de Chavigne

The 2003 Mâcon-Pierreclos 1er Jus de Chavigne is surprisingly backward on the nose, the candle wax and light undergrowth scents reluctantly evolving with aeration. The palate is fresh on the entry with a fine bead of acidity, lightly spiced with hazelnut and grilled walnut, and almost Meursault-like toward the ample finish, which is actually far more appealing than the aromatics at the moment. Overall, this is very fine.

-- Neal Martin 90 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2002 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne is much more mature and seemingly much more botrytized on the nose than the 2003 and 2005, offering light butterscotch and passion fruit notes and just a touch of mango. The palate is balanced with quite a honeyed, rich opening. Lower in acidity than I expected, and flat-footed on the finish compared to other vintages.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

2001 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne

The 2001 Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne is a wine that was made like at Thevenet. It has an attractive, fully mature bouquet of quite pungent lanolin and waxy notes and perhaps a little grey rot in the background. The palate is fresh but simple on the entry and a little lower in acidity than I would have liked. Some botrytis is evident on the finish, which has a welcome nutty/fumé edginess.

-- Neal Martin 90 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

2000 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne

The 2000 Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne has a slightly volatile bouquet that occludes the terroir profile. The palate offers walnut and light spices. Fully mature but missing just a little tension and energy toward the finish. This needs to be consumed sooner rather than later.

-- Neal Martin 86 Neal Martin 2020 - 2023 Not Available Feb 2020

1997 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne

The 1997 Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne has aged well considering that it is a 22-year-old Mâconnais. The nose offers lemon curd, orange pith and a wet wool note that echoes a fine Chenin Blanc. The palate is well balanced and clearly very ripe, although acidity keeps it on an even keel, and displays a slightly creamy texture and a touch of lemongrass toward the simple but appealing finish.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2021 Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Premier Just des Hauts de Vignes

The 2003 Pouilly-Fuissé Premier Just des Hauts de Vignes comes from the first-run juice in Les Crays, Les Croux and La Roche. It has a very slight reduction on the nose, but it works well, offering lovely yellow flower, crushed limestone and tangerine/marmalade scents that gain intensity with aeration. The fresh, vibrant palate is well balanced with crisp acidity, and the tensile, quite steely finish defies the growing season. Outstanding.

-- Neal Martin 94 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2009 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Saint-Véran Clos de Poncetys

The 2009 Saint-Véran Clos de Poncetys has a simple, quite rich bouquet that could do with a little more delineation but is open and generous, revealing touches of butterscotch and almond. The palate is low-acid, smooth and caressing, featuring white chocolate and walnut notes, but for me, this is a bit flabby on the finish.

-- Neal Martin 86 Neal Martin 2020 - 2022 Not Available Feb 2020

2007 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes

The 2007 Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes has a well-defined bouquet of candle wax, yellow flowers and jasmine. The palate is balanced, with a lovely bitter edge on the entry. Fresh and quite tensile, displaying fine depth, very good acidity and impressive salinity on the finish. Very fine.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2004 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne

The 2004 Mâcon-Pierreclos Tri de Chavigne has a rich, honeyed bouquet with passion fruit and mango notes that display good intensity. The well-balanced palate features fine acidity, a touch of reduction and a very spicy, peppery finish that lingers in the mouth. Fine.

-- Neal Martin 89 Neal Martin 2020 - 2027 Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Puligny-Montrachet Les Enseigneres Cuniculus

The 2005 Puligny-Montrachet Les Enseigneres Cuniculus, which was made between 1991 and 2005, has a backward, rather stony bouquet at first, becoming spicier and picking up faint curry leaf scents with aeration. The well-balanced palate delivers a fine bead of acidity, moderate weight and a waxy-textured, white-pepper-tinged finish that demonstrates decent persistence. Drink now and over the next four or five years.

-- Neal Martin 89 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon La Roche Vineuse VV de Sommere

The 2002 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse VV de Sommere oddly reminds me of a New Zealand Chardonnay, the lightly honeyed nose developing walnut and smoke notes in the glass. The palate is well balanced with crisp

acidity, and quite saline on the midpalate. There is fine energy and depth toward the impressively persistent finish, which is less botrytized than other coeval cuvées.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2001 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux

The 2001 Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux has a lovely nose not unlike a mature Riesling, featuring botrytized fruit that becomes more pronounced with aeration. The palate is well balanced with a sour lemon note mixed with grapefruit on the entry, and quite saline in the mouth, leading to a honeyed finish. I love the lingering light oxidative note, and I could imagine this matching perfectly with a 24-month Comté.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2000 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 2000 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru, which came from Domaine Bavard, has a powerful bouquet that misses the mineralité and tension of the best examples. The palate is rich and generous on the entry, a little too botrytized, in my opinion, and just lacking the definition and terroir expression you would expect on the finish.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2023 Not Available Feb 2020

1994 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Chassagne-Montrachet En Remilly 1er Cru

The 1994 Chassagne-Montrachet En Remilly 1er Cru has a very pure bouquet of tangerine, yellow plum and jasmine scents that gain intensity with aeration. The palate is well balanced with a fine line of acidity and lightly spiced, and the saline finish lingers in the mouth. This is a delightful Chassagne-Montrachet that has aged supremely well for a 1994.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2026 Not Available Feb 2020

1994 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux

The 1994 Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux is a cru that is no longer permitted due to the name of the lieu-dit. It has a generous, honeyed bouquet of white flowers, crème brûlée and touches of grilled walnut. The palate is well balanced with a lovely line of acidity, fresh and bright in the mouth. The edgy, slightly fumé finish sports great length, and the harmony and vivacity here seem undiminished after a quarter of a century.

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

1992 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Saint-Aubin Dents de Chien 1er Cru

The 1992 Saint-Aubin Dents de Chien 1er Cru is a single-barrel cuvée that was never commercialized. Funnily enough, I drank this around 15 years ago at a Guffens tasting in London. The ever so slightly oxidized bouquet shows a nutty, saline edge that becomes more accentuated with time. The palate is well balanced with a saline entry and notes of bitter lemon, quince and hazelnut toward the cohesive finish. This feels long and still vigorous, and maybe it will keep giving pleasure for another 15 years.

-- Neal Martin 89 Neal Martin 2020 - 2026 Not Available Feb 2020

1989 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne

The 1989 Mâcon-Pierreclos Le Chavigne is now missing a little vigor on the nose, yet there is still plenty of freshness accompanying the pressed flowers and waxy aromas. The palate is balanced with dried honey and light nutty notes and a discreet marine influence towards the finish, which just seems to have run out of puff.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2021 Not Available Feb 2020

2008 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 2008 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has a clean, precise bouquet of citrus lemon, orange pith and light ginger notes, vivid but not powerful. The palate is medium-bodied with a saline opening, fresh and lively. The saliva-inducing finish reveals tangerine and grapefruit notes. This is showing extremely well, but I might be tempted to cellar it for longer.

--Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2004 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 2004 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has a taut, fresh bouquet of live-wire citrus fruit, almond and hazelnut aromas, conveying wonderful energy; touches of egg whites/pâtisserie develop with time. The well-balanced palate displays hints of marmalade and quince on the entry and a fine bead of acidity. Very harmonious, with impressive weight on the finish. Excellent.

-- Neal Martin 94 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 2002 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche features lilted lemon peel, dried apricot and fennel on a defined, focused nose. The palate is well balanced with fine weight, an impressive bead of acidity and a slightly honeyed midpalate, offering orange zest, frangipane and sour lemon notes toward the persistent finish. Superb.

-- Neal Martin 94 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

1997 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 1997 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has aged very well over the last 22 years. It has an attractive nose of grapefruit, candle wax and light minty aromas that are subtle at first and then open with aeration. The palate is well balanced, with a walnut and hazelnut opening, and very saline in the mouth. The focused, tensile finish is long and satisfying. This is outstanding.

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

1994 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 1994 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has a light resinous bouquet of jasmine and light undergrowth aromas. The palate has an easygoing quality, not as fresh and tensile as the 1997, and an open, gentle finish. Fine, but the 1997 and 2002 show better.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2024 Not Available Feb 2020

1992 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 1992 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has a lovely bouquet that is fully mature, as you would expect, but the candle wax, walnut, smoke and light flor-like aromas are fresh and vivacious. The palate is well balanced with good grip and fine weight in the mouth. The slightly honeyed finish, accented with white pepper and spice, is old and maybe past its best, but I liked this more than others.

-- Neal Martin 89 Neal Martin 2020 - 2027 Not Available Feb 2020

2000 Domaine Guffens Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Les Hauts de Vignes

The 2000 Pouilly-Fuissé Les Hauts de Vignes has a detailed, mineral-driven bouquet that retains impressive energy considering that this wine is now almost two decades old. The palate is well balanced with a slightly honeyed texture countered by acidity, offering notes of mango, apricot and a pinch of white pepper toward the finish. This is showing very well and will continue to give pleasure for many years.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

1998 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Premier Jus

The 1998 Pouilly-Fuissé Premier Jus was picked late and with a lot of rot, so Guffens made two cuvées: Premier Jus and Deuxième Jus. The Premier Jus has a less complex nose than the 2000 Hauts de Vignes, featuring orange pith and touches of candy floss, and later a touch of strawberry. The palate is well balanced with a tangy, marmalade-tinged opening, fine depth and grip and an appealing, quite peppery finish of admirable length.

-- Neal Martin 90 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

1990 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche

The 1990 Pouilly-Fuissé La Roche has a very attractive bouquet of hazelnut, stem ginger, rhubarb, marzipan and light candle wax aromas. The palate is well balanced with a superb bead of acidity. This has great tension considering both its age and its growing season. Bitter lemon and orange peel emerge toward the finish; there is wonderful salinity here. A splendid 1990 Pouilly-Fuissé.

-- Neal Martin 94 Neal Martin 2020 - 2032 Not Available Feb 2020

2005 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux

The 2005 Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux has a very finely detailed bouquet, quite mineral-driven, offering yellow flower, jasmine and petrichor aromas. The palate is well balanced with a sapid opening, a fine bead of acidity and a harmonious, quite Chassagne-like finish that is suave and sophisticated. Superb.

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2035 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux

The 2002 Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux has a waxy, resin-scented bouquet of citrus fruit, wild white mushroom and touches of orange blossom. The palate is well balanced with a fine bead of acidity and lightly spiced with hints of gingerbread and orange peel, displaying the harmony and length of the 2005 but just a little less sophistication. Still, this is very fine.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

1997 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux

The 1997 Pouilly-Fuissé Clos des Petits Croux sports just a slight reduction on the nose, featuring scents of orange peel, jasmine, light flor-like aromas and lanolin. The palate is well balanced with a fine bead of acidity; there is good weight and concentration here. Saline notes emerge toward a finish that seems precise considering its age. Excellent.

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2032 Not Available Feb 2020

1995 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Chablis Valmur Grand Cru

The 1995 Chablis Valmur Grand Cru has a fully mature, dried-honey-scented nose that is missing real vitality. The palate is bitter on the entry, lacks complexity and feels dried out toward the finish. Apart from that, fine.

-- Neal Martin 85 Neal Martin 2020 - 2022 Not Available Feb 2020

1996 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 1996 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru has a very botrytized, honeyed bouquet that is pure if missing some delineation and mineralité. The palate has sour lemon, grapefruit and orange peel on the entry and a waxy-textured finish. Fine, but not enthralling.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

1997 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Meursault Poruzots 1er Cru

The 1997 Meursault Poruzots 1er Cru has fully matured on the nose, displaying honeyed fruit and wax. The palate is slightly oxidized on the entry and rather sour, with an enervated finish. A second bottle is better, featuring walnut and smoke on the nose, a livelier palate with good acidity and a saline finish that lingers in the mouth; this is far more representative.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2027 Not Available Feb 2020

1992 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 1992 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru is far superior to the 1996, with more definition and scents of white flowers permeating the orange blossom and quince notes. The well-balanced palate delivers bitter orange and grapefruit, modest weight and good delineation on the finish. This is a decent Bâtard-Montrachet that has aged well, though not a top-tier wine from this vintage and vineyard.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

1994 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 1994 Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru has a slightly muffled honeyed, candle wax and pressed flower nose. The palate is well balanced with good intensity, powerful and grippy. The spicy, stem-ginger-tinged finish delivers a persistent lemongrass aftertaste. Given the growing season, this has aged well, though it does not set my heart on fire.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2027 Not Available Feb 2020

1994 Domaine Guffens-Heynen Montrachet Grand Cru

The 1994 Montrachet Grand Cru is missing the intensity of the Chevalier-Montrachet on the nose. The palate is waxy-textured on the entry and a little low in acidity, and the simple, dry finish does not exactly entice you back for another sip. Not bad, but I would prefer one of Guffens's Mâconnais wines if I had the choice.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2023 Not Available Feb 2020

2006 Chablis Les Clos Grand Cru

The 2006 Chablis Les Clos Grand Cru has a light, slightly grassy bouquet that does not really deliver the mineralité or concentration of this vineyard. The palate is better, with a fine bead of acidity, quite sharp and citric for a 2006 or a Les Clos, and a touch of oyster shell and flint on the finish. Not bad.

-- Neal Martin 88 Neal Martin 2020 - 2025 Not Available Feb 2020

2006 Verget Mâcon-Vergisson La Roche

The 2006 Mâcon-Vergisson La Roche has more intensity on the nose compared to the Chablis Les Clos tasted alongside, the scents of smoked walnut gently unfolding with time. The lightly spiced, well-balanced palate delivers a fine bead of acidity, good tension and touches of almond and a little peach toward the finish. This is delightful.

-- Neal Martin 90 Neal Martin 2020 - 2026 Not Available Feb 2020

2006 Verget Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes

The 2006 Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes has a generous, slightly petrolly bouquet that lacks a little finesse considering the vineyard. The palate is balanced, with good acidity and just a touch of volatility, but the wine feels a bit out of sorts. Incidentally, after Guffens's contract expired, this vineyard was sold to Domaine Chanson.

-- Neal Martin 86? Neal Martin Not Available Feb 2020

2004 Verget Pouilly-Fuissé Terroir de Pouilly Combes Vieilles Vignes

The 2004 Pouilly-Fuissé Terroir de Pouilly Combes Vieilles Vignes comes from a hot microclimate, according to Jean-Marie Guffens. It has a pretty, elegant bouquet of honeysuckle, dried honey and light hazelnut aromas, all precise and focused. The well-balanced palate delivers a fine bead of acidity, touches of white chocolate and walnut infusing the citrus fruit, and a dash of spice toward the persistent, saline finish. Very fine.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2004 Verget Chablis Vaillons 1er Cru

The 2004 Chablis Vaillons 1er Cru has a touch of almond, lemon curd and orange blossom on the nose, which feels precise and improves with aeration. The palate is well balanced with a fine bead of acidity, lightly honeyed and very pure, leading to a caressing, quite persistent finish. This is a superb Chablis Vaillons.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

2004 Verget Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes

The 2004 Corton-Charlemagne Vieilles Vignes feels volatile and suffers some reduction issues on the nose. The palate is bitter on the entry and feels raw. A wine that is clearly past its best.

-- Neal Martin ? Neal Martin Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Verget Puligny-Montrachet Sous le Puits

The 2002 Puligny-Montrachet Sous le Puits, a cru that debuted in 1991, presents a rich, generous bouquet of dried honey, peach skin and light flinty aromas. The palate has a lovely flow from the very start, offering a fine bead of acidity, a caressing texture, and tropical notes toward the finish, which retains admirable precision. Excellent.

-- Neal Martin 92 Neal Martin 2020 - 2030 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Verget Saint-Véran Terres Noires "Atom Heart Mother"

The 2002 Saint-Véran Terres Noires "Atom Heart Mother" was a production of just one new barrel that was never commercialized. (It actually comes from the lieu-dit of Côte-Rôtie and contained no SO₂.) It has a very well-defined bouquet of dried honey, pressed yellow flowers, orange blossom and light flinty notes that blossom with aeration. The palate is very well balanced and quite rich in style, with (probably) some botrytis that is seamlessly integrated. I love the walnut and lychee that comes through on the persistent finish. Bon vin!

-- Neal Martin 93 Neal Martin 2020 - 2026 Not Available Feb 2020

2002 Verget Chablis Mont du Milieu 1er Cru

The 2002 Chablis Mont du Milieu 1er Cru is focused and detailed on the nose, offering irresistible honeysuckle and jasmine aromas and just a soupçon of marmalade in the background, and displaying impressive intensity. The harmonious palate is well balanced with a fine bead of acidity and touches of white chocolate and almond, turning a little peachy toward the finish, which leaves behind a persistent crème brûlée aftertaste.

-- Neal Martin 87 Neal Martin 2020 - 2022 Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Verget Chassagne-Montrachet Les Chenevottes Cuniculus 1er Cru

The 2003 Chassagne-Montrachet Les Chenevottes Cuniculus 1er Cru has a lovely bouquet of beeswax, tangerine and touches of lanolin. The palate is well balanced and quite rich, with a honeyed texture, perhaps missing a bit of acidity but very caressing on the lightly spiced finish. Maybe it just lacks a little persistence on the aftertaste, but otherwise this has aged impressively in the context of the growing season.

-- Neal Martin 91 Neal Martin 2020 - 2028 Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Verget Chablis Montée de Tonnerre Cuniculus 1er Cru

Unfortunately, I found this bottle too oxidized.

-- Neal Martin ? Neal Martin Not Available Feb 2020

2003 Verget Viré-Clessé Vieilles Vignes de Roally Cuniculus

The 2003 Viré-Clessé Vieilles Vignes de Roally Cuniculus has a well-defined bouquet of pretty lemon curd, peach skin and pressed flower scents that gain intensity with aeration. The palate is well balanced with a pleasant bitter lemon note on the entry, a viscous texture and notes of orange peel and walnut on the finish. Very fine.

-- Neal Martin 89 Neal Martin 2020 - 2024 Not Available Feb 2020