

Domaine du Vicomte Liger-Belair (Vosne-Romanée)

2002	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	(93-96)
2002	Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière"	red	(87-89)
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	(89-92)
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	(88-91)
2002	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Reignots" 1er	red	(91-93)
2001	➔ Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière"	red	89
2001	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	90
2001	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	90

The young Louis-Michel Liger-Belair, who has added two new and important wines for 2002, calls the vintage "a real surprise. We had rot everywhere at the beginning of September and I was beginning to think that we were going to have another 1994 on our hands. Thankfully, there wasn't a lot of it but the initial signs were widespread. And then the famous north wind blew and completely changed the vintage as it stopped the rot, preserved the acidity and concentrated everything. In fact, it drastically concentrated the crop as it reduced yields to between 32 and 36 hl/ha but because the acidity was preserved, the grapes were beautifully balanced. Sugars were quite high and we chaptalized only .2%, which was really just to prolong the fermentations then it was to add alcohol. The vintage reminds me a lot of 2000 in that it's already agreeable. The malos were done early, in fact by December but since I don't rack after they're done, I don't really care whether they finish early or late. I have to watch my SO₂ levels if they finish early but I try very hard to add none at all". He will bottle by gravity with no pumps in January, which is earlier than usual because Liger-Belair is worried about drying the wines out if they're left too long in cask. The Liger-Belair '01s have turned out just as well as they appeared from cask and are all recommended. (A Becky Wasserman/Le Serbet Selection - sbw@wanadoo.fr; Justerini & Brooks and Richards Walford, UK).

Now that the sharecropping arrangement with Régis Forey has ended, Liger-Belair is responsible for all of the vineyard work for these vines and will retain 50% of La Columbière, Reignots and La Romanée. The other half will continue to be raised, bottled and commercialized by Bouchard. However, in 2006, Liger-Belair will keep and market 100% of the wine under the domaine label. Thus, for the next 4 vintages, which is to say 2002 through 2005, there will be two versions of La Romanée (as well as the other two wines), which will make for interesting comparisons as only the *élevage* will vary.

2002 Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière": (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). Partially reduced nose largely hides a reserved, spicy black fruit nose. The opulent flavors however are very expressive with a rich, sappy, velvety and utterly delicious character and excellent length. This is very Vosne in style and extremely pretty. (87-89)/2007-12

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château": (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). A deft touch of wood frames exuberant black fruit aromas and spicy, rich, beautifully detailed flavors that are linear but not strict and a beautifully balanced, precise and persistent finish. This delivers striking quality for its level and is highly recommended. (88-91)/2008-14

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes": (from vines planted in 1945). A clear notch up and though the spicy black fruit is more reserved and less expansive, it's also more elegant and finer. The medium weight red and black fruit flavors are also linear and precise with simply gorgeous texture on the wonderfully long finish. Wonderfully stylish and graceful. (89-92)/2008-16

2002 Vosne-Romanée "Reignots": (the Liger-Belair vines in this small vineyard run from top to bottom whereas the others are situated in segments; Cathiard is on top, Grivot in the middle and Arnoux at the bottom). Noticeably reduced but the flavors are full-bodied, rich and delicious with more prominent acidity and a powerful, indeed even explosive finish. The structure is buried and completely buffered by all of the sappy extract and there is an appealing minerality on the extremely persistent finish. This is very classy juice. (91-93)/2008-17

2002 La Romanée: An adroit trace of wood frames stunningly elegant, dazzlingly complex black fruit aromas, leading to sappy, mouth coating, powerful and very deep flavors of astonishing richness and length. But it's the seamless harmony and sheer class that puts this at another level. In a word, breathtaking. (93-96)/2014-30

2001 Vosne-Romanée "La Columbière": The note of *pain grillé* this displayed from cask is now entirely gone and in its place are highly aromatic, richly elegant fruit combining with edgy, crisp, spicy flavors of beautiful length. This is quite linear and firm at the moment yet there is good offsetting depth and volume with a mere trace of finishing rusticity. 89/2006-13

2001 Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”: Beautifully elegant and pure fresh red pinot fruit aromas lead to medium weight, understated, intensely linear flavors and a complex, fine yet austere finish. This is decidedly tighter than the Columbière with a lovely mid-palate sweetness highlighted by the obvious minerality of the finish. A very pretty effort. 90/2007-15

2001 Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes”: Richer, rounder and fuller with the same elegance and fine, precise, very focused intensity plus excellent length. Taut and muscular with a touch more complexity but at the moment at least, this is not head and shoulders above the Clos du Château and it's not quite as dense either. Still, this is very lovely. 90/2007-15