

Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair (Vosne-Romanée)

2004	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	(92-95)
2004	Vosne-Romanée "La Colombière"	red	(87-90)
2004	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	(90-92)
2004	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	(89-91)
2004	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Reignots" 1er	red	(91-93)
2003	La Romanée Grand Cru	red	94
2003	Vosne-Romanée "La Colombière"	red	88
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes" 1er	red	90
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château"	red	89
2003	➔ Vosne-Romanée "Reignots" 1er	red	92

Louis-Michel Liger-Belair told me that 2004 was the kind of vintage where you had to be "very vigilant all the time. You had to watch for oidium and rot. And with the hail, you had to make sure that the affected berries were drying up and not becoming an incubation ground for rot. You had to watch very carefully your crop loads because in a vintage where there was limited sun and just as importantly, limited luminosity, there was no way the vines could achieve adequate phenolic ripeness if you didn't. We began picking on September 25th and we picked slowly while doing a very careful *triage* as it was critical because even with fairly low crop loads in the context of the vintage, the vines still couldn't ripen everything. So for us, sorting was more an issue of making sure that we discarded any unripe and under ripe grapes. This effort paid off though as we had natural sugars of around 12.9% and I chaptalized a quarter degree to around 13.25% or so. Because we had good phenolic ripeness, I didn't limit the total *cuvaison* and depending on the wine, they ran from 15 to 23 days. Overall, I quite like the vintage, particularly the freshness and the transparency to the underlying *terroir* as each wine is distinctly different." As the scores suggest, the Liger-Belair '04s are terrific wines and it's remarkable how good the wines have become after only a few years. And the '03s are perhaps even better when viewed within the context of that very difficult vintage. Liger-Belair is on his way to become a bona fide star in a village with lots of them. Yes, the wines have become expensive but it's not necessary to drink La Romanée to find out how good these wines are. If you don't know them, you owe it to yourself to find a few bottles and try them, particularly from 2001 on. (A Becky Wasserman/Le Serbet Selection - sbw@wanadoo.fr – additional distributors include Vinalia Imports, Camarillo, CA and USA Wine Imports for "Selection Pas Mal", New York, NY; 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 Colombière, 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 4 vintages, which is to say 2002 through 2005, there will be two versions of La Romanée (as well as the other two wines).

2004 Vosne-Romanée "La Colombière": (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). A very fresh, bright and pretty nose of black and spicy pinot fruit that leads to rich, sweet and textured flavors culminating in a dusty, mouth coating and punchy finish. This is beautifully balanced and while not overly complex just now, this aspect may develop with time in bottle. (87-90)/2011+

2004 Vosne-Romanée "Clos du Château": (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Colombière - 100% new wood). A clear step up in aromatic elegance with really lovely and airy red pinot fruit laced with spice and earth tones that resemble a fine Chambolle in their delicateness. The middle weight flavors are also quite fine with an underlying minerality and a linear, pure and persistent finish that is most impressive. This is an excellent *villages* level wine and one that should reward 7 to 8 years in the cellar first. (89-91)/2012+

2004 Vosne-Romanée "Chaumes": (from vines planted in 1945). This isn't necessarily more elegant but there's more underlying material. This is perfumed and notably pure with spicy dark berry fruit aromas that lead to textured, sweet and moderately structured medium full flavors that are very Vosne in style. This is one gorgeous wine that also possesses a linear, detailed and transparent finish that just goes on and on. A terrific '04. (90-92)/2012+

2004 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). A gentle hint of wood frames exuberantly spicy and exceptionally elegant black pinot fruit with obvious mineral notes that merges seamlessly into edgy, pure and superbly well delineated middle weight flavors that possess near perfect balance on the linear, pure and crystalline finish. This is seriously classy juice with a certain coolness to it. In sum, this is a knockout. (91-93)/2014+

2004 La Romanée: This is blessed with an absolutely stunning nose that is genuinely kaleidoscopic in its breadth and complexity featuring black spice, earth, underbrush, hints of Asian spices, soy and hoisin. In certain important aspects, this quite resembles the Reignots, particularly the cool personality because even though the nose is amazingly expressive, the flavors sit back and wait for you to come to them. I like the texture here and together with the powerful, sappy and unbelievable length, this makes a serious palate impression. Classic La Romanée in every respect. (92-95)/2016+

2003 Vosne-Romanée “La Colombière”: (vines between 40 and 60 years of age - 50% new wood). Very ripe and spicy but not *confituré* (jammy) with rich, full and sweet medium full flavors that are complex and quite dense yet supple on the medium length, nicely powerful mocha-infused finish. This is a generous and relatively fresh but serious effort that is easy to like and delivers fine quality. 88/2007+

2003 Vosne-Romanée “Clos du Château”: (a *monopole* of the Domaine with 30 year old vines and much rockier soil than Columbière - 100% new wood). This too is quite ripe with more than a passing resemblance to the '04. There is ample Vosne spice mixed with black cherry and cassis notes and while the flavors are definitely plummy, there is no overtly jammy character. This is blessed with beautiful density and better overall precision plus a lovely undertone of firm minerality gives the finish real lift. In short, this is a lovely *villages*. 89/2011+

2003 Vosne-Romanée “Chaumes”: (from vines planted in 1945 that produced only 2 barrels). Plum, spice, smoke and sexy black fruit aromas merge into rich, elegant and beautifully complex medium full flavors blessed with abundant extract that coats the palate and culminates in an exceptionally ripe finish of excellent length. There is another dimension here and this is a delicious yet serious wine that finishes with a gentle touch of wood spice. 90/2011+

2003 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). Floral black fruit and spice mark the nose here, which is followed by superb extract of pinot flavors which completely buffers the dense but fine tannins and somewhat mutes the underlying minerality at the moment. Still, this is clearly very classy and textured if tight juice that will require 7 to 10 years to be at its best. Great balance here and this should age beautifully. 92/2013+

2003 La Romanée: Anise, plum, Vosne spice and violet notes combine to create a seductive but discreet nose that is followed by equally tight, pure and understated flavors of superb precision and stunning complexity coupled with the hallmark finishing austerity. This is a powerful wine of outstanding density and the persistence is nothing short of amazing. A great and firmly structured yet opulent effort that possesses that rare 'wow' factor and this could surprise to the upside. 94/2015+