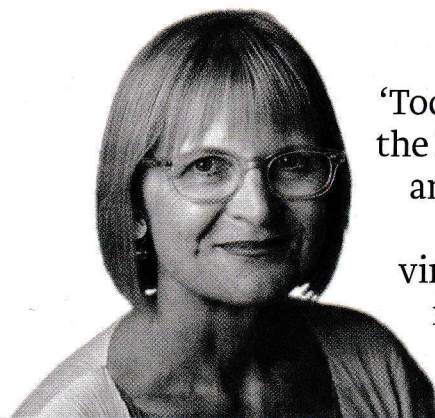


# Jancis Robinson



‘Today, the leaders of the Beaujolais region are making serious wines, properly vinified rather than rushed to market’

## Bojo with mojo

What’s an offline?” asked my husband as he read an account of an evening I spent recently in the company of wine geeks and a load of old Beaujolais. He, as you may gather, is blissfully unaffected by the symbiotic obsessions of wine and online bulletin boards that had drawn together my fellow tasters for a get-together in the flesh, or an “offline”.

This particular rendezvous of habitués of wine-pages.com was organised by Thomas De Waen, a Belgian who has been in private equity in London for the past 10 years. A wine nut disgusted by price rises in recent vintages, he turned his back on Bordeaux, only to see the same thing happening to his beloved Burgundy. So now he is turning his considerable attention to the long-neglected red wines made at the southern limit of Greater Burgundy – Beaujolais, and in particular aged Beaujolais.

He has been keenly aware of the fact, highlighted many a time on these pages, that Beaujolais has been seriously underpriced for years. The reputation of the wines has been tainted by the ephemeral, inconsequential nature of over-industrialised Beaujolais Nouveau, on which the region depended for far too long. Today, the leading producers are making serious wines, properly vinified rather than rushed to market, and De Waen wanted to demonstrate to us fellow wine lovers that – contrary to accepted wisdom – these wines can successfully be matured in bottle. Better still, many of the wines we tasted would cost under £20 a bottle retail – if you could find them.

Before our bibulous dinner, in a private room above a wine-minded restaurant in London’s Clerkenwell, De Waen had pointed out that it’s “really hard” to source properly aged Bojo. “There just isn’t any around, regardless of price. And when it is sold, it is generally by some small merchant in the middle of France with no inclination to send stuff to the UK. Nightmare.” He noted ruefully that he couldn’t buy any wine from his favourite producer, Philippe Jambon. He therefore raided his own cellar and went to considerable effort to assemble suitable demonstration bottles. De Waen’s tip for those who wish to indulge in his passion for



### JANCIS'S PICKS

From youngest to oldest. Try [winesearcher.com](http://winesearcher.com) for stockists.

- Foillard Morgon, Côte du Py 2009 Morgon
- Château Thivin 2007 Côte de Brouilly
- Georges Descombes, Côte du Py 2007 Morgon
- Louis Claude Desvignes 2006 Morgon
- Diochon, Vieilles Vignes 2005 Moulin-à-Vent
- Philippe Jambon, Les Baltailles 2005 Vin de France
- Hubert Lapierre 2005 Morgon
- Chateau Thivin, La Chapelle 2005 Côte de Brouilly
- Diochon 2005 Moulin-à-Vent
- Foillard Morgon, Côte du Py 1999 Morgon

### Château Thivin 2007

**Côte de Brouilly**  
Château Thivin’s regular 2007 bottling of its famous Côte de Brouilly (£18.99, Selfridges) is drinking beautifully at nearly seven years old



mature Beaujolais, incidentally, is to visit Alain Dutournier’s two-Michelin-star restaurant Carré des Feuillants in Paris, whose list currently offers 10 venerable Beaujolais dating back to 1989, mostly at €60 or €70 a bottle.

Our bottles were supplied mainly by De Waen but also by several other participants, a mix of wine professionals and connoisseurs. It was one of those who brought, from his uncle’s cellar, what was the single most revelatory contribution of all – a half bottle of simple AC Beaujolais 1970 bottled by the négociant Geisweiler.

AC Beaujolais is the lowest of the low, Beaujolais-Villages a modest step up. The great majority of the best wines of the region come from one of the Beaujolais crus – Chiroubles, Saint-Amour, Fleurie, Régnié, Brouilly, Côte de Brouilly, Juliéna, Chénas, Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent in roughly ascending order of body and ageability. These names appear on labels that may not cite the word Beaujolais at all (just as a Chambertin label may not mention the fact that Chambertin is a burgundy).

Furthermore, because of the greater ratio of air to liquid, wine in half bottles is meant to age far faster than wine in regular bottles. And bottlings by the big négociants (merchants) are conventionally thought to be the least authentic and promising. But this wine – despite having a crumbly cork and having to be decanted – was delightful and perfectly fresh. A little sweet but still vigorous, and with Beaujolais’ combination of vibrant fruit and appetising acidity, wherever it came from.

We began with a run of Morgons from Foillard, from 2009 back to a wonderful 1999 which offered the glory of a successful old-fashioned red burgundy from that famous vintage but had in fact been bought recently by De Waen for just €20. We then had a couple of oddities that are De Waen’s personal favourites. Les Baltailles 2005 from Philippe Jambon had, most unusually, been aged for three years in tank and three in old oak. This was very “natural” (minimal additions) and very unlike any other Beaujolais but was certainly spicily arresting and full of life.

The Interdit from Jules Desjournays was mainly 2008 with a bit of 2009, and failed to be given appellation contrôlée status because of its very marked deviation from the Beaujolais mainstream. It was just too tart for me. ▶

Illustration **Ingram Pinn**

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◀ But the next flight, wines from the widely admired Château Thivin of Côte de Brouilly, should not be too difficult to find at all and was much more recognisable as decidedly superior Beaujolais. There were representatives of the special Chapelle and old-vine Cuvée Zaccharie bottlings, though actually the most delightful wine of all was the regular 2007 bottling, still available commercially. The special cuvées probably simply need more time.

A couple of Côte du Py Morgons from the admired Jean-Marc Burgaud from the 2005 and 2006 vintages followed but, to quote De Waen's online report the next morning, "did not get much love". At this stage anyway, they seemed particularly tough. That this was no fault of the vintages was proved by the gorgeousness of a Diochon Moulin-à-Vent 2005 and a Morgon 2006 from the appropriately named Desvignes.

There was certainly the odd dud but overall De Waen succeeded in proving that Beaujolais can not just last but improve in bottle, and that old Bojo is one of the best values in the wine world.

As one attendee reported the following morning: "What a Beaujolly evening! Thank you to Thomas for finding so many interesting and difficult-to-obtain wines... Were any of the wines transcendently great? No. Did I enjoy them? Yes. Except my recall is so foggy that I am not sure which." **FT**

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*Tasting notes on Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com  
Stockists from wine searcher.com*

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