

TASTING REPORT: BEAUJOLAIS' CHÂTEAU THIVIN



The Beaujolais region is among France's most beautiful. Blessed with picturesque gentle rolling hills, it is reminiscent of Central Tuscany. Villages sit atop prime hilltop sites as a reminder of feudal times but the most famous hill in the region is the vine-covered Mont Brouilly which, standing volcano-like, forms a beacon for one of the most prized Cru Beaujolais appellations, the Côte de Brouilly.

The standing of all Cru Beaujolais has quietly improved and, on the eve of this recent tasting of Château Thivin's Côte de Brouilly wines running as far back as 1992 (a vintage that proved to be one of the real highlights), a discussion around the virtues of drinking these wines was largely mounted at the comparative expense of generic Bourgogne-level pinot noir wines from the Côte d'Or.

There is little to argue against the merit of a good Cru Beaujolais ahead of generic Bourgogne Rouge. The former delivers distinctive wines full of interest, wines that improve reliably with age, are farmed with greater attention to detail and in a region that is a leader in sound, sustainable farming practice. They carry much greater depth complexity whether young or old. Bourgogne Rouge can lay claim to little of this.

Indeed, with its beautifully preserved moated castles and fortified villages, Beaujolais casts a formidable shadow within the Burgundy region. History can be found at virtually every turn and certainly in the best Cru vineyards which are often home to densely planted, goblet-trained vines with fifty, sixty or more years of age beneath them.



To grasp Château Thivin's stake within the region's fabric of history, you need only to glance at their labels. Their winegrowing heritage can be traced as far back as the 13th century, but the significant thread starts with an acquisition of land in 1877 by Zaccharie Geoffroy, to whom the estate's Cuvée Zaccharie wine is dedicated.

Yet, for all this history, the wines have a dual stance of modernity and tradition and I would say they tap into the best of both worlds. The vines are old and the cellars have been carefully renovated to retain the enduring benefits of traditional vinification and embrace aspects of more modern practice.

The resulting wines are silky and saturated, with a deep-set, visceral character and they are impressive for their purity. Thivin hand-harvests their 8.3 hectares spread across the east, south and southwest aspects of the Côte de Brouilly appellation and its blue andesite stone soils.

Fermentation involves a mix of traditional whole bunches and de-stemmed berries and both large, ancient (100-plus-year-old) foudres and new barriques are used for maturation. The wines are bottled without fining or filtration.

With the exception of some 2009s and 2010s, which I tasted on release back in 2011 and 2012 and have added to the report, these wines were all shipped as one tranche from the domaine and tasted in Melbourne in February 2016. Seek them out and clear some space in your cellar. The recent 2013s are superbly plump and seductive; the 2014s will have their moment further forward in the calendar.

Below are all the wines arranged by scores; click on wine names for notes and scores if you are a subscriber.

[Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly 1992](#)

[Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2009](#)

[Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2001](#)

[Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée La Chapelle 2009](#)

[Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2010](#)

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Clos Bertrand 2014

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée La Chapelle 2014

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2002

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2003

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2005

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2008

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Griottes de Brulhié 2010

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Griottes de Brulhié 2013

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Sept Vignes 2014

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly 1994

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Clos Bertrand 1995

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Sept Vignes 2009

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Sept Vignes 2010

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Les Sept Vignes 2013

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly 1997

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 2000

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly 1996

Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Cuvée Zaccharie 1999

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