

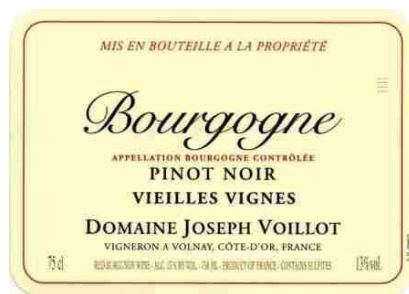
# Domaine Joseph Voillot

## Côte de Beaune



*It was a great pleasure to revisit Domaine Joseph Voillot and taste with Jean-Pierre Charlot and his nephew Etienne Chaix. As Chaix takes the reins, ably counseled by Charlot, the approach to winemaking hasn't changed: what Charlot calls the "bon sens paysans" prevails, with destemmed grapes, classical macerations and modest percentages of new oak. As ever, these are very classically proportioned wines that really repay bottle age.*

–William Kelley, The Wine Advocate, January 2021



In July of 2014 Joseph Voillot died in the house he grew up in, just in front of Volnay's thirteenth-century church. Joseph was a *vigneron* through and through, the fourth generation of his family to manage the estate, and he represented the old breed of Burgundian growers. On the day of his funeral, Volnay overflowed with those paying homage.

He wasn't the first Joseph Voillot, however; that honor goes to his great-great-grandfather, the Joseph who founded the domaine in the 1840s, farming various crops, sharecropping vineyard parcels, and maintaining a few vines of his own. His son Jean-Baptiste subsequently added several parcels, including Clos Micault in 1870, increasing the total to over seven acres. The third generation, Marius, added Volnay Fremiets, Pommard Rugiens, and Meursault Les Cras (and probably inherited vines through his marriage to Céline Rossignol). Their son was the second Joseph Voillot, who added yet more parcels to the stable. By 1957, one-third of the production was domaine-bottled, the rest sold to the *négoce*.

The second Joseph had three daughters, none of whom wanted to follow in his footsteps. Thus his son-in-law Jean-Pierre Charlot (below) came to join him. Like Joseph, Jean-Pierre was steeped in Burgundian culture. His father managed grower relations and wine selections for the then family *négociante* firm of Bouchard Père et Fils. Jean-Pierre got a degree in enology, embarked on a stint as a courtier, or local broker, of wine in Beaune, and fell in love with one of Joseph's three daughters. He went on to teach winemaking at Beaune's viticultural school while working with Joseph for fifteen years until the latter's retirement in 1995, at which point Jean-Pierre took over. During his tenure, additional fermenting tanks were purchased, all of the domaine's production was bottled, export markets were opened, and the parcel of Beaune Coucherias was acquired. Above all, he refined his father-in-law's style, earning the domaine an enduring reputation for wines of traditional elegance and breed. Jean-Pierre retired in 2019.



Like Joseph before him, Jean-Pierre had no heirs. The uncertainty of what might happen ended when his nephew Etienne Chaix (below) joined him in 2016. Etienne is Joseph's grandson and represents the 6th generation of the family. He stopped all use of herbicides in the vines and went to using Diam corks, but beyond that hasn't changed much. The farming is sustainable, with cover crop allowed over winter and weed control undertaken by shallow plowing in summer. All vines are hand harvested and all the grapes are de-stemmed. Initial fermentations happen without yeast additions in concrete and stainless steel tanks, and the use of new wood during *élevage* remains 10-20% for the premier crus; less for villages; none for the Bourgogne (but which is raised in barrel). The wines are not fined and are only lightly filtered, if at all, at bottling.

Today the domaine farms vines spread across Volnay and Pommard, along with the parcel in Beaune Coucheries. All of the *Villages* parcels are farmed the same, and all of the premier cru parcels are treated the same; ditto for how these wines are treated in the cellar. The differences come from the sites.

In 2001 and 2004, many of those parcels were badly hailed, and this was repeated, stunningly, in 2012, 2013, and 2014. Those last three years saw hail coming in June or July and flaying the same swath of land from Meursault to Beaune, a consecutive cataclysm never before recorded. Crop loss averaged as high as fifty percent. Following that third hailstorm, Jean-Pierre sold the family holding in Volnay's Les Brouillards, and now the domaine's total vineyard surface is nine hectares, or just over twenty-two acres.

In the early morning of April 27, 2016, the worst frost in seventeen years descended upon Burgundy and the domaine lost well over 50% of its crop. What kept morale up was Etienne's coming on board, thus ensuring that the domaine would remain in the family.

Etienne's first "official" vintage was the 2019, which, although short in crop, was quite an auspicious start for this dedicated young man.

[www.joseph-voillot.com](http://www.joseph-voillot.com)

