

Côte d'Or

The wines and winemakers of the heart of Burgundy

Raymond Blake

Fresh take on the côte helps readers conquer their fear of terroir

If there is any region where terroir reigns supreme it is the Côte d'Or. Overused puns aside, this small region is notoriously complicated, with countless books written on its world-renowned subdivided vineyards, *climats* and *lieu-dits*, some *grand cru*, others *premier cru* – nearly all eye-wateringly expensive. Wine expert Raymond Blake demystifies the subject in his new book, *Cote d'Or: The wines and winemakers of the heart of Burgundy*, which is published this month.

This companionable book gives readers fresh insight into the region by exploring its history and culture as well as detailing the geology and climate of the region. As Blake says, it “aims to get behind the dazzle and flesh out the story, to add some nuance and extra dimension ... I try to see beyond the wine to get something of the backstory, the story of people and place that makes the Côte d'Or so fascinating. To examine the wines in isolation is to dislocate them from that, and not knowing something of the backstory precludes a full understanding of them.”

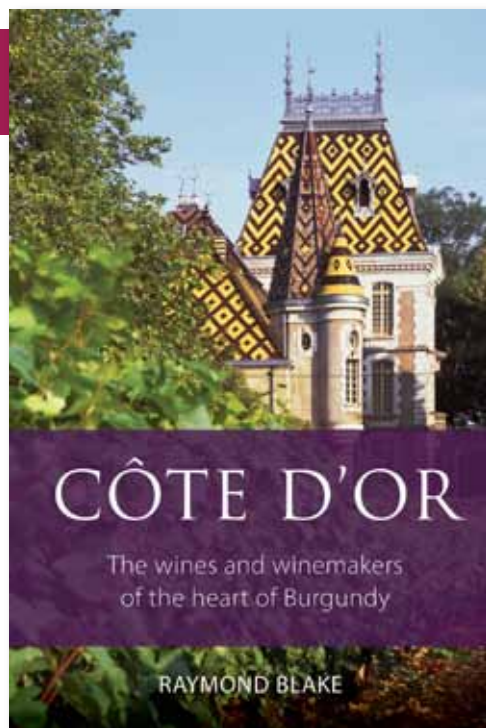
Most crucially readers are welcomed into some of the greatest wineries in the world, where they will learn straight from the *vignerons'* mouths what it is that makes the wines from this region so special. In a region where such emphasis is placed on the land itself it is easy to forget that soil, vine and wine are all hugely influenced by human hand. The owner of a plot of *grand cru* vineyard could conceivably still make a decent living from wines with minimal effort, simply by trading on the renown of the land but most choose not to. Blake's personal selection of around 100 producers includes a range of winemakers chosen to give a true cross-section of wine production in the Cote d'Or in 2017. We see the great range of methods employed by the

owners of the various *domaines* – some with histories stretching back through the centuries, others just a few decades old – in both the vineyard and the wine cellar. In addition, for each winery, the author supplies a ‘try this’ note where he introduces readers to a wine that is particularly interesting, surprising or representative of the *domaine's* offering. And look out – there are some bargains among these wines too.

As the Côte d'Or continues to evolve, Blake takes time to note how current problems – from soaring land prices to premature oxidation – are being addressed by the producers and speculates on what the future holds for the côte. Will the increasing problems of frost and hail change the way the vineyards are farmed? Will Brexit have a detrimental effect on trade with one of the region's most important markets? How will the côte cope with competition in the shape of lower priced and increasingly high-quality offerings from the likes of Germany, New Zealand and South Africa? But Blake concludes on a positive note, suggesting that in decades to come we might look back on the early twenty-first century as the côte's golden age.

About the author

Raymond Blake is one of Ireland's leading wine writers. As an independent voice his judgement and opinions are widely respected. He is wine editor of the highly regarded *Food & Wine Magazine* and writes for numerous other publications. As such his travels take him to most of the far-flung corners of the wine world, though his spiritual home is Burgundy. In 2006 he was inducted as a Chevalier du Tastevin in Burgundy – at the same time as he and his wife bought a house in Côte d'Or.



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