

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

BY [JOEL M. FISHER](#)



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Jean-Pierre Cropsal, external and public affairs for **Domaine Drouhin**, Beaune, Burgundy.

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FALL INTO GERMANY AND FRANCE

A group of 45 culinary students and alumni from the [Art Institute of California-Los Angeles](#), two chefs, a couple spouses, one extremely well-behaved toddler and I recently headed to the [2004 Culinary Olympics](#), held this year in [Erfurt, Germany](#). We watched more than 1000 competitors from 32 nations bake and cook their way towards medals. In the end, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States walked away with golds. Go team!

I checked out the exhibit halls, where I found precisely one winery: **Winery Glock**, located in Germany's Nahe region and run by Director Heinrich Glock, son Heinz, and daughter-in-law Gritt. I tasted nine wines from their 220-acre estate. While their reds are coming along, their whites are notable. The 2003 *Riesling Trocken* (12.5% alcohol) proved a perfect balance of dryness and fruit. The 2003 *Weissburgunder Pinot Blanco* (14% alcohol) was a bigger wine, sporting a lovely nose and a reasonable price tag – at

least in Germany. Most notable was their medium-dry *2000 Riesling Halbtrochen Weinsheimer Kartergrube* (11.5% alcohol), which danced on the tongue.

Our group hit the road after the Olympics. Heading west, we moved through the Black Forest, crossed the Rhine and cut through Alsace to Burgandy. There, we stopped for lunch in the city of Beaune before pushing onward to the historic cellars of [Maison Joseph Drouhin](#).

I met with Jean-Pierre Cropsal, the charming external affairs and public relations representative for Drouhin. He helped plan our visit to the Drouhin cellars and called Chablis to arrange lunch the following day. I think it's terrific that some of the large wineries in Europe and the U.S. have trained wine people like Jean-Pierre doing external relations. It's a powerful combination of talents and knowledge.

When the time for our tour came, Jean-Pierre led us down dimly lit tunnels that stretched under the city and into the ancient caves. The tasting was held in a breathtaking subterranean "great room." Sadly, now that Drouhin has new headquarters south of Beaune, fewer visitors will be able to visit the caves. The wines we tasted were enjoyable, and I'm excited about their upcoming [Beaujolais Nouveau](#). Jean-Pierre did me a favor and called their Beaujolais operation to get the latest word. It's due out November 18, and the winemaking panel is reportedly very pleased with its progress. A similar call to Chablis yielded similar enthusiastic news.

Speaking of Chablis, thirty of us headed there the following day. Our tasting started with the *2003 Domaine Drouhin de Valdons Chablis* (12.5% alcohol), made from organically farmed grapes. This was an excellent wine, with good acidity and muted fruit. It displayed that wonderful flintiness that I love in Chablis, and paired well with a smoked-fish salad. Next was a *2001 Chorey-Les-Beaune*, which was fragrant with warm spices and currants. It complimented the duck comfit nicely. The well-balanced *2003 Premier Cru Vaillons* boasted a strong nose, a long finish and nice fruit. The *2002 Chablis Vaudesir Grand Cru* was bolder, possessing a deep flavor and an interesting finish. This very nice wine displayed a delicate green tint. Wined and dined, my students and I wrapped up our visit with a tour of the operation, which included a tasting of the new Chablis before fermentation.

All in all, our group had a wonderful time in Burgundy, in Chablis, and at the [Culinary Olympics](#). My thanks to everyone who made this trip possible.

Postscript from Paris: I visited [Willi's Wine Bar](#) in Paris, which is famous for carrying over 250 wines and exceptional food. I had called owner Marc Williamson from Los Angeles weeks in advance to make dinner reservations. Our European correspondent, Matt Fisher, and I picked an old friend to drink that night with the Werners: a *1999 Cote Rotie* from **Patrick Jasmin**. This well-structured bottle lived up to the late Robert Jasmin's best: it held beautiful fruit and spices, lush aromas, and a mineral edge. The velvety wine lingered on the palate. We were just delighted!

I'll be back next month, with a review of the best of the Beaujolais Nouveau. Join us on November 18th at Victors in Hollywood if you have the opportunity.

Happy Holidays!

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