

In Chablis, even the greatest producers on the most prized grand cru hillsides are often forced into a risky game of winegrowing craps. **Such was the case in a 2010 harvest that some are calling the equal of the monumental 2008** -- while others (based on our three days of tasting in town) came up snake eyes.

Laurent Pinson had already lost 35% of his crop on "Les Clos" before Nature turned on the jets in September. **At 10 p.m. on the 23rd, Pinson made the call. The following morning, under darkness, after the requisite *café au lait*, the family and crew took to the hillside**, bringing in exquisite shot-berry Chardonnay that would rank among the finest of this miracle harvest.

**The two greatest Chablis critics in the world came out exactly where we did on this jaw-dropping grand cru.** Steve Tanzer and Allen Meadows of Burghound aren't much for grade inflation. But, this time, neither could help himself.

**Tanzer came in at 91-94 points**, describing the **2010 Pinson Chablis Les Clos** as "rich, ripe, saline and light on its feet, with lovely breadth to its saline flavors of white peach and acacia flower." **Burghound turned it up a notch to 92-95, adding that this gorgeously concentrated, fabulously mineral Chardonnay will hit full stride in 2018 -- or beyond.**

Good news also on the FX front. The dollar touched \$1.26 Friday, and we're reaping the rewards. Regular price of \$70/bottle. On today's small (just 50 cases with the small harvest) pre-release, **just \$45.99/bottle on cases. Shipping included on 4. Collector's Alert.**



DOMIANE PINSON

## **A 95pt Crapshoot in Chablis**

**It was a crapshoot, one of those growing seasons where snake eyes lurks at every turn.** Flowering was late after a flash winter frost. Then it turned cold and rainy, particularly on the top premier crus and prized grand crus of Chablis. By May, yields had already been trimmed by nearly 30%.

After a monumental 2008 vintage and a ripe, forward 2009 harvest, **Laurent Pinson was fast becoming reacquainted with the grape growing risks on the greatest Chardonnay hillsides in the world.** 2010 had all the characteristics of Nature's payback. Just one thing to do. Hold on to your chips. Take your lumps and move on.

June and July were warm, just what the croupier ordered -- except for the hail storm that further thinned yields and sent the family scurrying into "Les Clos," hand-plucking damaged clusters, cleaning up Nature's mess. "We were resigned," Laurent Pinson told us. "We were working non-stop, but almost wondered why. Expectations were low."

In mid-September, the weather took a magical turn. **The clusters were small with plenty of shot berries -- what the**

**French call *millerandages*.** Each turquoise sky morning, Pinson awoke. The temperatures were unseasonably warm. With so little fruit on the vines, maturity would spike if only the weather held out. Still, acids remained high -- maybe too high. **Pinson put the entire family and all their seasonal harvesters on red alert.** If Laurent rolled the dice and decided to pick, every cluster on "Les Clos" would hit the crusher in a single day.

At 10 p.m. on the 23rd, Pinson made the call. Under darkness, the family and their crew drank *café au lait*, ate baguettes with butter and homemade raspberry jam. By daybreak the pickers were all over "Les Clos" like bees. Somehow, Pinson had made the perfect call ("*la chance*," he told us). The previous 10 days had indeed paid huge dividends. **The small berries were delicious, the sugars high enough to completely eschew chaptalization (adding sugar to push alcohol levels).** The acids had softened, but still provided textbook crispness and stinging flash.

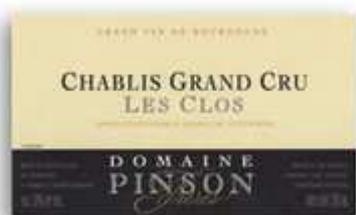
Many would wait. **Some would even claim that the sweeter berries harvested a week to ten days later -- after several days of rain that Pinson wanted no part of --** provided for richer Chablis, and that the corresponding drop in acidity was a worthy tradeoff. After our three days of cellar hopping in the top cellars -- all within a short walk of our rooms at Hostellerie des Clos in the center of town -- we thought otherwise.

**So would the world's two most fastidious Chablis critics -- Stephen Tanzer of *International Wine Cellar* and Allen Meadows of *Burghound*, both of whom would rate Laurent Pinson's 2010 Chablis "Les Clos" among the top five wines of this miraculous harvest.**

Tanzer came in at 91-94 points, calling this beautifully concentrated, fabulously wound-up mineral beauty "**rich, ripe, saline and light on its feet, with lovely breadth to its saline flavors of white peach and acacia flower.**" Meadows, perhaps even tougher with his ratings than the grade-deflating Tanzer, came on stronger. **The Burghound rating was a whopping 92-95 points, suggesting that this monumental grand cru Chardonnay would be hitting stride in 2018 -- and beyond.**

Some good news for WineAccess members as we begin 2012. After three years of FX doldrums, the dollar is staging quite a comeback. The 2010 Pinson Chablis "Les Clos" was set to be offered two months ago. **This time, it was our turn to roll the dice. We waited, and when the dollar hit \$1.26 on Friday, following the French downgrade, we called the importer, saving each of you almost a hundred bucks a case.**

Not much on its way to us, as so little was made. Just 600 bottles of one of the greatest grand cru Chablis of this miraculous vintage. **\$45.99/bottle on cases, shipping included on only 4. Collector's alert.**



## Tasting Notes

### 2010 Domaine Pinson Freres Chablis Les Clos

"Pale yellow. Complex, highly perfumed nose offers citrus fruits, white peach, minerals, sexy brown spices and subtle oak suggestions. Rich, ripe, saline and light on its feet, with lovely breadth to its saline flavors of white peach and acacia flower. Classy, deep wine with excellent concentration and length. Really dusts the palate with flavor on the aftertaste. The Pinsons will bottle their premier crus in July but wait until the end of the year for this grand cru."

**91-94 points -- Stephen Tanzer, *International Wine Cellar***

"(90% was vinified in stainless with 10% in new oak followed by an *élevage* in 1 year old wood). Moderate wood fights somewhat with the ripe floral, spiced pear, sea breeze and pungent mineral notes that also suffuse the exuberant and extremely rich broad-shouldered flavors that possess outstanding power on the ultra-dry, intense and linear finish. This displays seriously impressive development potential and it should be stunning in time. 2018+"

**92-95 points -- Allen Meadows, *Burghound***