



As I wrote last year, genial Manu Bautista's small winery in the hamlet of Touches is one of the Côte Chalonnaise's finest estates, and I encourage readers wishing to encounter red and white Mercurey at its most gourmand and seductive to seek out his wines. Emphasizing that everything follows from the quality of the raw materials, Bautista harvests by hand in small cases. Whites are vinified without stirring, the naturally rich wines of Mercurey having, he contends, no need for supplemental "fat" from the lees; reds see long cuvaisons with temperatures kept in the mid-80s Fahrenheit to preserve the expression of fruit. Elevage then takes place in barrels and demi-muids exclusively derived from—and made to measure by—the talented Stéphane Chassin, whose Rully cooperage supplies many of the region's best addresses. Topping up is meticulous, and Bautista's attention to detail will be evident to anyone who visits his cellars. The results speak for themselves: supple, fragrant reds bursting with vibrant fruit that entirely conceals their velvety tannins and precise, flavorful and harmonious whites. In short, Bautista is one of a small handful of producers that demonstrate just what is possible when Mercurey's terroirs are lavished with the same attention devoted to their more famous Côte d'Or counterparts.

Wafting from the glass with a generous bouquet of buttered orchard fruit, confit citrus and green mango, framed by a deft touch of elegantly toasty new oak, the **2018 Mercurey 1er Cru En Sazenay Blanc** is medium to full-bodied, textural and enveloping, its ample core of fruit underpinned by ripe but lively acids and promising structuring grip. This is showing very well out of the gates. **91/100**

Exhibiting aromas of fresh peach, apricot and warm bread, the **2018 Mercurey 1er Cru Les Vellées Blanc** is medium to full-bodied, bright and precise, its satiny attack segueing into a racy, youthfully tightly wound core. Bottled under Diam 10, this should really open up after a few years in the cellar. **91/100**

Manu Bautista's **2018 Mercurey Vieilles Vignes** has turned out very well, offering up an inviting bouquet of smoky cherry and raspberry fruit mingled with raw cocoa, sweet soil tones and a deft framing of oak. Medium to full-bodied, deep and layered, it's succulent and concentrated, built around lively acids and powdery tannins. While 2018 is an inherently muscular vintage and this will benefit from a few years in the cellar, it's rendered with such elegance as to be approachable young. **90+/100**

Offering up inviting aromas of cherries, plums, sweet spices and dark chocolate, the **2018 Mercurey 1er Cru En Sazenay** is another irresistible wine from Manu Bautista. Medium to full-bodied, supple and enveloping, it's ample core of ripe but succulent fruit is framed by melting tannins and mouthwatering acids. **92/100**

The **2018 Mercurey 1er Cru Les Vellées** has also turned out beautifully, wafting from the glass with an inviting bouquet of red cherries, plums and cassis mingled with hints of violets and dark chocolate. Medium to full-bodied, deep and layered, its concentrated core of fruit is underpinned by powdery tannins and impressively lively acids that lend this Mercurey terrific energy. **92/100**

The **2018 Mercurey 1er Cru Clos du Roy** has turned out superbly, and it's one of the finest wines I've tasted from Manu Bautista. Unfurling in the glass with aromas of cassis, plums and dark chocolate mingled with subtle hints of spice and licorice, it's medium to full-bodied, velvety and enveloping, its deep core of succulent fruit framed by powdery tannin and lively acids. Beautifully balanced despite the warm vintage, this is a superlative Mercurey worth a special effort to seek out. **94/100**

Dr. William KELLEY