

Domaine Roger/Joseph Belland (Santenay)

2006	Bourgogne	red	85
2006	Chassagne-Montrachet "Clos Pitois" 1er	red	88
2006	Les Maranges "La Fussière" 1er	red	86
2006	Pommard "Les Cras"	red	88
2006	Santenay "Les Charmes"	red	86
2006	Santenay "La Comme" 1er	red	87
2006	Santenay "Les Gravières" 1er	red	88
2006	Santenay "Beauregard" 1er	red	87
2006	Volnay "Santenots" 1er	red	89
2005	Santenay "Beauregard" 1er	red	88

Roger Belland noted that 2006 was "a difficult vintage in red. They are actually quite ripe, indeed not far off of 2003 though with better acidities but it was a lot of work to get them there. Moreover, ripeness levels were heterogeneous and thus you had to sort carefully but less for rot than unripe, or under ripe, berries. The stems were ripe enough that I used roughly 10% of them and moved it up to 25% in 2007. I like the vintage as it gave wines of pleasure with clean, ripe and very pinot fruit." Belland has an interesting approach to vinifying his reds as he vinifies very slowly, indeed up to 6 weeks at very low temperatures and then lets them spike at the end for one to four days but he's careful to note that never higher than 40° C. I say the approach is interesting as it gives the wines two distinctly different aspects and is neither the very firm structure of a long vinification nor the slightly cooked fruit of those that heat to even higher levels. It does confer a certain mouth feel to the wines and one either likes that or one doesn't. It's not classic but it's not "gummy" or excessively suave and round either. In another change, Belland has now gone 100% to Diam corks, which are a composite so no more TCA-affected wines. How they will age is another question but Belland explains that he has done tests and is satisfied that his wines will age as well as before. Time will tell. The reds were bottled between November and January. I repeat here what I have said for the last several vintages, which is that Belland's wines represent very good quality/price values, provided of course that you like the style as it won't be for everyone. I wish to stress that the style is not extreme but neither is it traditional. (T. Edwards, New York, NY; Berkman Wine Cellars, Berry Brothers & Rudd, Lay & Wheeler, Liberty Wines among others, all UK - Note that the exact same wines are sold under the Joseph Belland label, which is represented by Cellar Door Selections, Columbia, MD).

2006 Bourgogne: Classic ruby. A pretty red berry fruit nose leads to serious and nicely concentrated middle weight flavors that are rich, full and possess good volume on the moderately structured but only mildly rustic finish. Solid quality though perhaps not quite as fresh as it might be. 85/2009+

2006 Les Maranges "La Fussière": A notably ripe nose features mostly dark cherry and hints of raspberry that introduces rich, full and sweet flavors that again possess fine volume and concentration, underpinned by round tannins and good power if lacking just a touch of freshness on the otherwise persistent finish. 86/2009+

2006 Santenay "Les Charmes": A slightly more elegant nose offers good aromatic breadth with an earth-infused dark berry fruit profile that slides into rich, full and generous flavors supported by firm but not hard tannins that presently give the finish a slight hint of bitterness and this too lacks just a hair of freshness, especially for the vintage. 86/2009+

2006 Santenay "La Comme": Here there is more of the freshness that the first 3 wines lacked with earthy dark berry fruit aromas preceding finer middle weight flavors that deliver good energy and a subtle touch of minerality on the nicely detailed, if ever-so-slightly bitter finish that will very likely round out in a year of two. 87/2010+

2006 Santenay "Beauregard": The ripest wine to this point with equally fresh earthy dark berry fruits that merge into rich, round and relatively full-bodied flavors that possess good mid-palate sap that buffers the firmer if less fine tannins. This is a bigger and more powerful wine that offers good length if not much elegance. 87/2011+

2006 Santenay "Les Gravières": An attractively bright and fresh mix of red and dark berry fruit aromas complements the rich, dusty and nicely precise medium full flavors that deliver both minerality and punch on the mouth coating and slightly bitter finish. Like the La Comme, this appears to have sufficient underlying material to round off the bitterness. 88/2011+

2006 Chassagne-Montrachet "Clos Pitois": (a huge 3 ha *monopole* of the Domaine, planted 50% to each color and which sits at the south end of the commune on the Santenay border; the pinot vines are approximately 60 years of age). This is also reasonably fresh with an admirably complex mélange of red and blue pinot fruit nuanced by floral and earth hints that are also picked up by the rich, full and sappy flavors that finish with a trace of edginess and a hair of the bitterness referenced above. Again, this would appear to have sufficient buffering material to age out of it. 88/2011+

2006 Pommard "Les Cras": A complex and airy nose is set off by a discreet but noticeable hint of char that isn't really enough to detract from the ripe and earthy crushed berry fruit aromas that dissolve into minerally and precise medium weight flavors that deliver fine depth and length though not the depth of the Clos Pitois. 88/2012+

2006 Volnay "Santenots": Not surprisingly, this is the most elegant wine in the range and in 2006, it's also the freshest with layered and relatively refined red pinot fruit aromas mixing with precise, sappy and admirably persistent flavors. There was a higher percentage of stems used here and the vinification is really quite deft as their presence is felt in the texture rather than tasted. The best in the range in 2006. 89/2012+

2005 Santenay "Beauregard": An earthy and ripe yet cool red and dark berry fruit nose complements round, supple and nicely detailed flavors that display reasonable depth and while the tannins are not especially sophisticated, neither are they the typical rough and tumble variety that one usually associates with Santenay. This would merit a higher score on the basis of the underlying material but I was mildly put off by a warm finish. 88/2010+