

STUART PIGOTT

FLEURIE: Les Fleurs du Charme et les Fleurs du Mal

Of All the Flowers in All the World...



The most vineyard site of Fleurie, the future 1er Cru La Madone (I-B)

Beaujolais Series: 4 / 14

By Stuart Pigott – last revision 06.04.26

Vineyard Area: 758 hectares (2024)

Percentage of Total Production: 6% (2024)

Appellation Established: 1936

PART ONE: What's in a Name?

FLEURieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

It rolls off the tongue so easily, leaving no doubt that the flowers in question are not those of poet Charles Beaudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, or flowers of evil. NO! These are NICE FLOWERS! I've no doubt that the global success of Fleurie has a lot to do with the attractiveness of its name. I mean, who doesn't like the idea of either being presented with a big bouquet of flowers, or presenting such a bouquet to their Significant Other?

But there's more to it than just an attractive name. The wines of this Beaujolais Cru often smell and tastes as pretty as a bouquet of flowers. It's the way this name that suggests charm with aromas and flavours frequently leads to a smell and taste experience that fulfils these expectations! The demand thus generated gave Fleurie the highest average vineyard price of all the Beaujolais until 2010, and even now it's in second place, just behind Moulin-à-Vent.

This success is a double-edged sword, because the dominant style of the wines suggested to many regular wine consumers that Fleurie's floral lightness, and the brightness of its fruit aromas is how all Beaujolais Crus wines smell and taste. It's another example of Image Bleeding from a narrow group of products to a much broader category. Let me be frank, when I started out tasting Beaujolais in 2019 I imagined that Morgon was *Fleurs du Mal* and the rest of the Cru were more or less like Fleurie, i.e. charmingly floral. It took me a moment to realize my mistake.

PART TWO: The Truth About Fleurie (and Beaujolais) Terroir and Winemaking

As Natasha Hughes MW points out in her new book *The Wines of Beaujolais*, one of the most persistent misconceptions is that all the Beaujolais Cru have pink granite soil. However, this is true of Fleurie, and the majority of Fleurie's vineyards are on *shallow and stony granite soils*. I already mentioned that this pushes wines from the Gamay grape in a floral, intensely fruity direction, regardless of exactly how the wine is made. The wines from the steep slopes of Fleurie's most famous lieu-dit, or vineyard site, La Madone (pictured at the top) are prototypical examples of this.

After decades dissecting terroir (French for the taste of the place), it's clear to me that winemaking always plays a certain role. I'm sure that many producers in Fleurie – consciously or unconsciously – chose vinification techniques that accentuate the direction their wines want go in so as to fit in with consumer expectations. And why not? It's not morally reprehensible, much less a crime!

PART THREE: The True Flowers of Fleurie

Domaine des Nuges Fleurie 2024 – 13% / Effusive bouquet of black raspberry. Good substance and a crisp acidity. Stony acidity at the long, crisp and moderately dry finish. 91 (SP)

Domaine des Nuges Fleurie Les Côtes 2020 – 14.5% / This has the ripeness I expect from the vintage, but it is anything other than muscular, in fact it is rather restrained. In spite of that, pronounced balsamic note in the nose. The tannins have soften nicely on the front palate, but are still substantial at the slightly warm finish. From 70 year old vines, this was bottled in June 2023 and has just been released. 92 (SP)