

ONE BOTTLE

THE 2002 BONNEAU DU MARTRAY CORTON-CHARLEMAGNE

BY JOSHUA BAER

- #1. McCoy Tyner's piano on the John Coltrane Quartet's version of Rogers and Hammerstein's *My Favorite Things*.
- #2. Richard Diebenkorn's works on paper, especially his spade pictures, collages, and Soda Lane drawings.
- #3. Ron Barralito, the queen of Puerto Rican rums.
- #4. The last line of Ernest Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream*.
- #5. La Tâche, in all of its aspects and vintages, especially the way the wine tastes like nothing but itself.
- #6. Domaine Dujac, Jacques Sesseyes, and the Sesseyes family, for making red Burgundies that remind me of La Tâche.
- #7. Australian Shepherds, especially Saint Genevieve, Cuba and Azore, Marie-Galante and Arthur the Beast, and Jack and Louis.
- #8. Tassajara Springs, especially the old baths, the Becks, the curved bridge, "free and shining, within and without," the stone cabins, the old and new kitchens, Pajama Lane, the gutters at the edges of the pool, the kerosene lamps, the barn with the view of the tan oaks on the hillside, the three crossings, the Narrows, and the sounds the creek makes at midnight.
- #9. The view of San Francisco Bay and the Bay Bridge from the Berkeley Hills, especially at night during the late 1960s, when the original eastern span from the toll booth to Yerba Buena Island resembled the torch-lit entrance to an oversized circus tent.
- #10. Stella and Gabe's naked eyes.
- #11. All of Dan Welch's gifts, including but not limited to his calligraphic paintings, resemblance to the mountain, fluency in Katakana, and religious pizzas.
- #12. Old Santa Fe, especially during the late seventies and early eighties, when hospitality was still a way of life and intimacy was still regarded as a virtue.
- #13. Eliza's mysterious ways, including but not limited to the way she laughs, the way she cries, and the way she cultivates theories about the people, places, and things that make her laugh and cry.
- #14. The big dreams, especially the dreams where the mountain is the landscape and the ancestors laugh and smile like they have all the time in the world.
- #15. Classic Navajo blankets, especially the bayeta ponchos, white background serapes, classic chief's blankets, and bayeta mantas.
- #16. A lifetime of long walks, many in the company of Black Jack, whose dark eyes see everything before it happens.
- #17. The way the markets listen when everyone's talking, and talk when nobody's listening.
- #18. Bob Dylan's reference to Jimi Hendrix as "the gypsy."
- #19. John Lennon's jaded voice, before, during, and after the echo chamber, but especially on *I'm Only Sleeping*, *Rain*, and *Don't Let Me Down*.
- #20. Matthias Goerne, the German baritone, especially his version of J. S. Bach's *Cantata #82, Ich habe genug*. No one blends the ecstasy and the sorrow into a single sustained note like Goerne.



- #21. *You look like who you say you are*
So scoot over let me drive your car
Roll down the glass and give some wind
Lock all the doors I'm on the loose again alright...
Along with every other grunt, howl, lyric, and note in *Thug*, by ZZ Top.
The best version is still the studio cut from *Eliminator*.
Which brings us to #22, the 2002 Domaine du Martray Corton Charlemagne.

Corton-Charlemagne is a *grand cru* vineyard, a *appellation*, and an imposing hill located in the French communes of Aloxé-Corton, Ladoix-Serrigny, and Pernand-Vergelesses. The slopes of Corton-Charlemagne are planted with vineyards. The top of the hill is covered with a forest of pine trees. From the south, the wide thin line of the forest looks like the crust at the top of a cheese soufflé. All of the vines at Corton-Charlemagne grow Chardonnay grapes, but to refer to a Corton-Charlemagne as "a Chardonnay" is like referring to an attractive woman as a "a chic"—not so much an understatement as an insult.

Corton-Charlemagne refers to the Emperor Charlemagne, who used to own the hill. "Charlemagne" comes from the Latin "Carolus Magnus," or "Charles the Great," though French alchemists translated "Carolus Magnus" as "the great song." According to Burgundian lore, Queen Hildegard, Charlemagne's second wife, preferred white Burgundies to red Burgundies because the whites left no stains in her husband's beard.

While several winemakers make Corton-Charlemagne, the best known domains are J.F. Coche-Dury, Louis Latour, Jean Chartron, and Bonneau du Martray. Of the four, Coche-Dury is the most expensive (\$1200 to \$1500 a bottle), Latour is the most typical, Chartron shows the most restraint, and Bonneau du Martray offers the greatest degree of enchantment.

In the glass, the 2002 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne radiates soft light. The bouquet is steady at first, then it becomes what the French call *sauvage*—our "wild and crazy." Be careful of the thoughts you have when you inhale the bouquet. If anyone in the room happens to be reading your mind, he or she may never speak to you again. On the palate, there are suggestions of ancient ambitions and modern cravings. The finish is tragic, in the sense that it is over before you have the chance to appreciate it.

What I love most about Bonneau du Martray's Corton-Charlemagnes is the way they age, and the way the wine poured from an aged bottle manages to be simultaneously aloof and engaged. Of the available vintages, the 1999, 2004, 2007, and 2009 are the most renowned but the 2002 is the vintage that brings tears to my eyes. And that's why it completes my list of favorite things.

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wines and good times, one bottle at a time.
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