

## Denis Mortet Gevrey-Chambertin

*"You feel he knows every vine personally,"* wrote wine critic Clive Coates after visiting Denis Mortet. Indeed, Mortet is the epitome of hands-on winemaking, taking special care not parcel by parcel, but vine by vine. "He is an independent character and, rightly, proud of what he does," Coates concluded.

Denis formally began his career in 1977 at the age of 21, when he joined his father's firm in Gevrey-Chambertin, *Domaine Charles Mortet & Fils*. At the time the family owned just one hectare of vines. By acquiring leasing contracts of additional vineyards, the Mortets increased their holdings enough to begin estate bottling in the early 1980's. By this time Denis' brother Thierry had joined the family business as well. With their holdings totaling only eight hectares in thirty different plots running from Daix to Clos Vougeot, the Mortets began exporting their wines in 1984. Denis continued to improve the quality of fruit in the vineyards and fine-tune his techniques in the winery.

By 1991 Charles Mortet was ready for retirement. He judiciously split the land holdings between his two sons, but with such small holdings that the future was unclear for Denis Mortet. Luckily, his hard work had been noticed by a local vigneron, Bernard Guyot. The aging Guyot asked Denis if he would be

interested in caring for his own 4.5 hectares. Happily, he agreed and was able to acquire additional vines from various leases. Today he boasts 2 grand cru's from leased vineyards: Chambertin and Clos Vougeot as well as the premier cru vineyards of Lavaux St. Jacques and Champeaux. In all, there are 14 different appellations in the line-up totaling 22 acres of pinot noir and 2.5 acres of

chardonnay.

Tragically, Denis Mortet passed away in January 2006 – leaving behind his wife Laurence and two children, Arnaud 23, and Clemence 13. Arnaud successfully oversaw the 2006

harvest. After graduation from the Lycée Viticole in Beaune, he did harvests in Oregon, and Australia. He was responsible for bottling the 2005 harvest made by his father.

Arnaud's priority, like his late father, is the quality of the grapes. He continues to hand plough and hoe the vineyards, working the soil to force the vine's roots deep into the bedrock. He says he has "complete confidence in the fruit," and encourages its natural growth without the use of pesticides or herbicides. Pruning is vigorous, as is triage, both in the vineyard and at the winery. The grapes are destemmed and cold macerated before active fermentation begins. Bottling is done without filtering or fining. His efforts come to fruition with wines that are succulent and silky.

