



Beaune's Best Wine Bars

by Jane Sigal
photos by Jon Wyand

In the early 2000s, when Paris entrepreneurs were reinventing the wine bar with exciting bottles and ingredient-driven food, the wine capital of Burgundy showed little interest. Living amid some of the world's grandest terroir, Beaune's epicures preferred to drink their own wines in full-fledged restaurants or at home.

Change arrived slowly. In 1985, *Le Bistro Bourguignon* had tested local drinking habits by pouring wine by the glass. But it wasn't until 1997 that Laurent "Lolo" Brelin upended the ancient régime, by converting his parents' restaurant, *Caves Madeleine*,

into a *cave à manger*, a wine shop that serves food. And it was outside the city's medieval ramparts, on the low-rent rue du Faubourg Madeleine. Brelin stocked an open-minded selection of Burgundies as well as wines from other parts of France, plus stars of the natural wine movement rarely seen on the lists of elevated establishments.

In the last few years, more bistrotiers have followed Brelin to the city's periphery, and wine bars have diversified, bringing more great wine discoveries and terrific food to the table.



Facing page: Bottles line the walls at *La Dilettante*. This page: heirloom tomato salad, and wine bar owner Laurent Brelin, above.

LA DILETTANTE

Lolo Brelin's second eat-in wine shop, the stone-and-brick-walled *La Dilettante*, is as laid-back and affordable as his first, and the place is packed with Millennials debating the merits of organic, biodynamic and natural wines. Opposite the bar, tables are pushed next to shelves of wine, where shoppers may reach over your head for bottles. Brelin, in T-shirt and jeans, pours wine and cuts ham and sausage on a red Berkel, the racing car of slicers. In the corner kitchen, his wife, Rika, prepares canonical French café food (sometimes with an Asian accent; she's Japanese), including a daily soup, like *velouté du Barry* (cauliflower puree), vegetable-packed pot-au-feu and an impressively oozy croque monsieur, the thick slice of ham topped with tomatoes and

a comforting layer of cheese. Brelin offers a dozen distinctive reds and whites by the glass, and his Burgundy-focused wall cellar (there's no actual list) holds remarkable values: François Raveneau's intense 2012 Chablis costs only 89 euros; a 2011 Nuits-St-Georges Clos de la Maréchale from Jean-Frédéric Mugnier is 95 euros. Pungent highlight: Down the street, at No. 31, is the 19th-century Edmond Fallot *moutarderie*. At this family-owned factory, you can touch, smell and taste your way through small-batch mustard-making, from seeds to finished condiment in two dozen flavors, including tarragon, walnut, black currant and green peppercorn.

La Dilettante, 11 rue du Faubourg Bretonnière; +33-3-80-21-48-59

CAVES MADELEINE

When wine bar impresario Laurent Brelin handed the keys from his first establishment to his chef, Martial Blanchon, the new owner smartly retained a winning formula. He kept the communal table and benches next to the wine shelves. Although the tables are bare, Blanchon's food is the kind that could easily be served on good linen. His à la carte menu, written in chalk each day, features updated bistro fare with especially high-quality ingredients. As does the fantastic 23-euro three-course lunch: The day I visited, the kitchen sent out a friendly hello in the form of crisp breakfast radishes, a slab of butter and superlative sourdough bread, which I enjoyed with a glass of Chablis from the biodynamically farmed vineyards of Château de Béru—one of the 20 choices offered by the glass that day. The first course, a silky puree of celery root and parsnips, came with a dollop of smoky whipped cream and toasted flax seeds. For the entree, Blanchon served Bresse chicken in a soy-spiked broth topped with a thatch of greens from his favorite farmer. If you have room for cheese, the nutty Burgundian Charolais and washed-rind Plaisir au Chablis are first-rate. The wine program is equally focused on local producers, several overlooked outside France, such as Domaine Régis Rossignol-Changarnier in Volnay, and others making a name for themselves internationally, like Yann Durieux at Recrue des Sens, whose cult natural wine Love and Pif is helping to turn the under-rated aligoté grape into a star.

*Caves Madeleine,
8 rue du Faubourg Madeleine;
+33-3-80-22-93-30*



Tomato soup and fresh sourdough bread at Caves Madeleine



LA TABLE DU SQUARE

Until spring 2016, Romain Escoffier's funky *Bar du Square* was best known for its prodigious bargain-filled wine list and an electric guitar lashed to the bar taps. Then, in March, Escoffier (no relation to the legendary chef) got serious about the food and changed the name to *La Table du Square*. The bearded barmen in lumberjack shirts are still there (so is the flea market couch with busted springs), but *La Table* now serves lunch and dinner. Escoffier is inspired as much by bistro classics as he is by modern techniques and exemplary products, so his baby lamb shoulder for two cooked sous-vide for 36 hours comes with textbook-creamy potato gratin. The meat-heavy menu also features duck leg confit, veal kidneys and steak from Burgundy's prized Charolais breed. Escoffier doesn't entirely ignore vegetables (or fish), however, and his fat white asparagus with mousseline sauce reminded me of the poached asparagus with chardonnay sabayon his mother, Fabienne Escoffier, cooked when she ran the bistro *Ma Cuisine*. (She now runs the *Bout du Monde* wine bar nearby.) The upgraded menu brings extra pleasure to the pairs-well-with-food drinks list, which includes smaller appellations from young (and noninterventionist) Burgundy producers such as Fanny Sabre, as well as select top winemakers from other regions, like Jacky Blot and Matthieu Baudry in the Loire.

La Table du Square,
26 boulevard Maréchal Foch;
+33-3-80-24-03-32

Provençal tart at
La Table du Square



Chef Roland Chanliaud

LA MAISON DU COLOMBIER

It was Véronique Drouhin-Boss, of the celebrated domaine Maison Joseph Drouhin, who recommended this chic gastrobar. Her suggestion shows how far wine bars have come in a few years and how they're being embraced by a new generation of the city's wine elite. For one thing, *La Maison du Colombier* is in the city center (near Drouhin's historic cellars), and in warm weather, tables spill out onto the cobblestone Place du Général Leclerc with a killer view of the Romanesque Notre Dame church. Inside the turreted 16th-century stone building, one stylish little dining room is outfitted with tall tables; leather club chairs are set up around two more vaulted rooms. The chef, Roland Chanliaud, recently sold his Michelin-starred restaurant, *Le Jardin des Remparts*, and downshifted to a tiny open kitchen. He offers tasty Spanish ham and sausage served on slate tiles, plus top-notch *tartines* (open-faced sandwiches) spackled with spreads like lemony whipped salt cod, Basque black pudding and truffled taramasalata. His blackboard lists a changing roster of Burgundy market dishes, like *escargots* in wild garlic broth and an ethereal soft egg paired with mushroom cream and tiny crisp croutons; ultra-classic chicken liver custard comes with an intense shellfish sauce made by sautéing langoustines and pounding their shells. Chanliaud's wine cellar moved with him, so the selection here is encyclopedic, with ten rotating wines by the glass and a 900-plus-label list, including a beautifully mineral St-Aubin Premier Cru Les Champlots from Burgundy rock-star producer Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey.

La Maison du Colombier, 1 rue Charles Cloutier; +33-3-80-26-16-26, maisonducolombier.com



LA LUNE

The couple sitting next to me at the L-shaped bar of this narrow space could not believe their good fortune that chef Seiichi Hirobe—who worked with star chef Laurent Peugeot in Perand-Vergelesse—had brought his French-Japanese small-plates menu practically to their door. They own a shop nearby and come twice a week, always sitting at the end of the counter, where the sight lines are ideal for watching Hirobe in his pint-sized galley. From here you can also see the ancient stone walls hung with old cooking tools—a conical sieve, a mezzaluna, copper spoons—and the short list of wines by the glass. Only three—a sparkler, a white and a red—are available (the bottle list is more extensive), but they’re served with generosity. When the nine-euro Nicolas Maillart Platine Premier Cru Brut Champagne I ordered wasn’t available, it was replaced—at the same price—with the more expensive Champagne Tarlant Brut Nature Zero. The same pour would cost at least \$25 in New York. It was devastatingly good with the *karaage*, battered, fried chicken that’d been marinated for hours. Thanks to my neighbors, I also got to taste the delectable clams *à la marinière* that Hirobe had steamed in fragrant sake. Come early or late; by 8pm, even the counter seats are taken. Better yet, reserve—at least a week ahead for Saturday dinner—and stay all night. *La Lune* (the moon) is open until midnight. *La Lune*, 32 rue Maufoux; +33-3-80-20-77-42