

2004 Domaine Thibault Liger-Belair • Richebourg Grand Cru

Rating

(90 - 92)

Drink Date

NA

Reviewed by

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As darkly rich and deep as are several of the wines in this year's collection, it is perhaps not surprising that the Thibault Liger-Belair 2004 Richebourg – from 70 year-old vines that he speculates are the oldest in the appellation (though we've heard this before, at Lucien Le Moine) – would be in every sense dark and deep. Palate-staining bitter blackberry and cassis concentrates, roasted, singed meat, and pan juices, intense smokiness, and peaty earthiness mount a veritable siege of the palate. An oaky whiff of coconut and caramel is extraneous, but in this context hardly annoying. This is among the most powerful Pinots of the vintage, not at all charming, but signaling grand aspirations and potential if given at least a decade in the cellar. (The 2004 was scarcely less concentrated or darkly-hued, but displayed a bit more raw tannin and heat.) In this his fourth vintage, and (like his cousin at Comte Liger-Belair in Vosne-Romanee) young, ambitious in the pursuit of quality, well-traveled, and in the process of taking back family property from rental and negociant contracts, Thibault Liger-Belair is ensconced in deep, ancient, and bitterly-cold cellars in the center of Nuits-St.-Georges. He has begun pursuing a biodynamic regimen in his vineyards and has inaugurated a rigorously-controlled negociant arm (its wines labeled "Thibault Liger-Belair Successeurs" and designated "S" in my listings). He says he approached 2004 with great caution lest the wines lose polish and finesse to over-extraction of tannins. Certainly the results have included some very powerful and formidably structured wines. Low sulfur and a significant inclusion of whole clusters ("depending on the circumstances and site," he says, "- I have no system") are among other prominent features of Liger-Belair's approach in 2004.