



DOMAINE LEFLAIVE



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Burgundy 2013 – Puligny-Montrachet
by Neal Martin

“Anne-Claude Leflaive – Zen-like Grace”

“You can more or less judge your Burgundy ‘cache’ by the wines you are allowed to taste. You work your way up until you are deigned with a glass pipette full of Chevalier-Montrachet from Domaine d’Auenay or Romanée-Conti or Clos des Lambrays (the elusive Taupenot-Merme, of course.). There is one wine that has eluded me since I first visited the domaine back in the late 1990s: the fabled Montrachet from Anne-Claude Leflaive. My tactic is always the same. I ask whether there is the usual single barrel, the answer is “Oui” and then the momentary pause indicates that unfortunately it is not for tasting. It’s a policy I completely understand and support. This year I asked the question and Antoine Lepetit de la Bigne instead replied: “Yes” and then invited me to taste it. I had come of age. It’s the same rush of elation as the first time you order a beer or drive a car on your own. I could give up here and think: “Yeah...Essex boy did good.” Of course, hardly anybody is ever going to experience the luxury of actually drinking the 300-odd bottles, so perhaps we should get on and discuss what mere mortals can drink. Fortunately, the news is that Leflaive has produced an excellent set of 2013s...

“The 2013 vintage started very humid. The end of the winter was very wet and the soils took time to warm up, the ever-congenial Antoine explains as he mounted a ladder to one of the stainless steel vats. ‘Everything was still very wet continuing into May, when the river in Meursault overflowed. In Meursault you could see vineyards under almost a meter of water! The flowering was late and we had poor (atmospheric) conditions because there were two rainfalls. It took three weeks for flowering to finish. July was average. We had a little hail on 23 July that touched the Meursault side of the vineyard (Combettes, Sous de l’Ane) but August was sunny and warm. We started picking 28 September and finished 6 October. The harvest was quite stressful. At the beginning we planned to pick slowly with a smaller team, but the forecast was unstable and unreliable. Sometimes they would say it would rain and it would be sunny - and vice versa! We had to stop on two afternoons because of rain. The reason was because they were unsure about the wind. It came from

the Mediterranean: warm and bringing wet conditions that brought botrytis pressure. We finished picking with a much bigger team. We even had one of the pickers phoning his friend in Brussels!’

“The first good surprise during alcoholic fermentation was that the wines were very aromatic with a moderate level of . . . good acidity. We had a clear separation between alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. We didn’t have a problem with any late malo and it finished by the end of June so that everything was racked by the next harvest. The wines have been more integrated since October. The quantities are down by about 20%.’

“As is customary, I tasted the wines from tank (with one notable exception). They had all been racked in August. Firstly, it is clear that there is extremely good terroir expression here. Each wine belongs to the same ‘family’ but they are all individuals with something unique to say. I would not ascribe superlatives to every single cuvee – it’s not that kind of vintage. But there is perhaps more consistency here than I expected given the pressures on the picking team come harvest. There were two crus that really punched above their weight: the Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet and the Puligny-Montrachet Combettes, the latter in Grand Cru territory. They just seemed to transcend the limitations of the growing season, wines with audacity and ambition. As for the Montrachet? Well, it was an astonishing wine no doubt, and even though by this time I had tasted several 2013s from barrel, this seemed to occupy a rarefied atmosphere. Departing the domaine, I was still on a high. I had been deigned with one of the rarest wines in Burgundy. What’s the next goal?”

2013 Domaine Leflaive Puligny Montrachet Village

“The 2013 Puligny-Montrachet Village, which sees around 15% new oak, has a fragrant bouquet: apple blossom, touches of peach and yellow plum, quite complex for a village cru. The palate is fresh and malic on the entry with a keen line of acidity. Linear and correct with a slightly abrupt but delineated finish. Very fine.” (89-91) points



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2013 Domaine Leflaive Meursault 1er Cru Sous le Dos d'Ane

"The 2013 Meursault 1er Cru Sous le Dos D'Ane was affected by flowering (though not as poor as in Puligny) plus hail and a low juice-to-skin ratio. It has a lifted bouquet with fresh citrus lemon, white peach and minerals. The palate is fresh and minerally on the entry, actually not too stylistically distant from a Puligny, with a linear, stony, correct finish with a subtle spicy aftertaste."

(88-90) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Clavoillon

"The 2013 Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Clavoillon has a sense of 'coolness' on the nose, a little aloof at first and then deigning to present you with light limestone and flinty notes. The palate is taut on the entry with a touch of sour lemon that lends this Clavoillon fine tension and persistence. One feels that it is holding something back. What that is, you'll need a cool dark cellar to find out."

(91-93) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Folatières

"The aromatics adorning the 2013 Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Folatières do not mess about. There's no prevaricating here. They come straight at you with quite intense stony aromas, unlike the Clavoillon that is more laconic. The palate is terse on the entry. This is a Folatières that seems to take itself seriously, austere at first, but then fanning out toward the finish as if it were toying with you."

(91-93) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Combettes

"The 2013 Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Combettes might well be the most startling wine from Anne-Claude and her team this year, one that probably transcends this propitious vineyard. It has an expressive set of aromatics like the Folatières, a little more 'fiery' at this stage perhaps, vivacious and defined with hints of lemon curd and white peach. The palate is voluminous and powerful with superb acidity and great depth. This is a Combettes with a lot of ambition and constitutes one of my favorites from the domaine this year."

(93-95) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Pucelles

"The 2013 Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru les Pucelles has a more resinous/waxy bouquet than its 'siblings' at the moment: complex and yet somehow, unassuming unlike the Combettes '13. It opens nicely in the glass to reveal orange sorbet and limestone scents. The palate is fresh and nicely poised with a keen line of acidity, touches of bitter lemon and a healthy dash of spice enlivening the saline finish. Everything you want from a Puligny Pucelles really."

(92-94) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru

"The 2013 Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru put its 'mineral credentials' straight in front of you: cold wet limestone. It takes you straight down to the bedrock: very precise, tightly wound at first and then opening with continued aeration. The palate is taut and linear on the entry, a very 'correct' Chevalier-Montrachet that is driven along by the acidic line and then fans out gloriously toward the finish. This is a very 'complete' Grand Cru, but it will require several years in the cellar. Sublime."

(94-96) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

"The 2013 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru has a subtle, mineral nose with Granny Smith apple, cream puffs and flinty scents developing after a couple of minutes in the glass. The palate is rounded and harmonious on the entry with glimpses of white peach and nectarine. The acidity is finely tuned and lends the finish an effortless feel. This Bienvenue is more about the texture than flavors at the moment, with just a touch of viscosity lending it a modicum of richness. Does it rank alongside the immense 2012? Perhaps it falls just short...but not by much."

(92-94) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

"The 2013 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru, like many from this vineyard, has an expressive and, compared to other vintages, you could almost say extravagant bouquet, bridled with intense citrus lemon, freshly sliced pear, limestone and even a faint touch of peppermint. The palate is intense on the entry with more depth than the Bienvenues at this stage. There is a pinch of spice here, shaved ginger adding a bit of fire at the front of the tongue, then attractive stony notes finally revealed on the finish and the aftertaste. Superb — for me perhaps superior to the 2012."

(93-95) points

2013 Domaine Leflaive Montrachet Grand Cru

"Though I have tasted this rarity twice from bottle, this was the first time that I have tasted it from barrel and therefore I have less context than Anne-Claude Leflaive's other crus. What I can say is that the 2013 Montrachet Grand Cru was quite astonishing. Even having just tasted the Chevalier-Montrachet, I have to admit that this was in a totally different league. It simply rockets from the glass with scents of citrus lemon, lemon curd, white peach and shaved almond all beautifully delineated. The palate is an intense 'experience,' that being the operative word. It envelops the senses, cradles them with citrus scents, almond, limestone and white peach scents, the texture surprisingly rounded but not viscous. With enormous persistence, this is quite a remarkable Montrachet to be."

(97-99) points