



CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

BENJAMIN LEROUX



**BENJAMIN LEROUX IS THE
LIVING PROOF THAT EVEN IN
BURGUNDY, IT IS POSSIBLE TO
COME FROM NOTHING AND TO
RISE TO THE TOP.**



Possible- but incredibly difficult. Ben's ascent is a story of hard graft, patience, a bit of luck but above all, raw talent and determination to succeed. He is widely considered to be one of the most gifted winemakers of his generation and today, almost 30 years after first beginning his wine career, he is now able to work with the greatest sites in Burgundy from an excellent facility in the heart of Beaune.

A Beaunois by birth, Ben's parents owned a flower shop in the town. It would be nice to make a connection between flowers and vines but the truth is that there was little in his background, other than geography, to suggest that Ben would end up as a major figure in the world of wine. At just fifteen years old, he began his studies at the Lycée Viticole in Beaune. One of the requirements was to find an estate for practical experience. Through one of his older brothers, he was introduced to Pascal Marchand, the young Quebecois installed as régisseur to turn around the fortunes of Domaine du Comte Armand in Pommard. Marchand agreed to take him on.



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Ben threw himself into his work and quickly became a vital member of the team. By 1999, it was time for Marchand to take up his next project and when Comte Armand considered his replacement, he found a ready-made solution. Still aged only 24 years, this was a significant position to be handed but Ben quickly repaid the owner's faith in him as he set about to continue the work of his predecessor. The detailed work in both cellar and vineyard proved Ben's capacity for hard work and patience and the vintages at the estate made under his command quickly drew admiration and attention. They also encouraged the owners to back Ben with further investment to continue the estate's advance.

The only drawback for Ben, however, was the relatively restricted nature of the Comte Armand holdings. Eager to continue to learn, from 2007 Ben began to buy small volumes of grapes from other appellations, with the blessing of his boss, to vinify under his own label. In 2014, he departed from Pommard, handing over the reins to his colleague Paul Zinetti, in order to concentrate full-time on his own wines. His reputation and track record enabled him to attract outside investment. As his grape purchases expanded, he required materials, buildings and eventually was able to begin to purchase his own vineyards, a remarkable achievement considering where he had started. Today he is producing around 180,000 bottles across more than 40 appellations. Some cuvées are as little as a single barrel, others are a blend of multiple parcels producing much larger volumes.

His skills in the winery, in both colours, are evident from the first encounter. The space is meticulously organised, spotlessly clean and his answers on the specifications of each and every wine are immediate and without hesitation. This is a man in command of his brief, revelling in his work and whose drive and ambition remains as bright as ever. In terms of techniques, Ben is another who prefers not to use a recipe but instead tailors his approach to suit each wine. Be it over the level of stems included, the percentage of new oak used, the size of the barrels, the length of *élevage* or any number of variables, Ben treats each wine as a separate case. When you have so many in your cellar, the only way to make the right choice is to be perfectly acquainted with the parcels from which the grapes come.

BEN ENDEAVOURS TO SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE OUT IN THE VINEYARDS, OBSERVING THE CONDITIONS, DIRECTING HIS TEAM AND ENSURING THAT AT HARVEST TIME THE FRUIT IS RECEIVED IN OPTIMUM CONDITION.

In terms of appellations, Ben has been able to win fruit contracts in some of the grandest sites purely by a demonstration of his abilities. Thus his cellar can boast the likes of Chambertin, Chevalier-Montrachet and Bonnes-Mares. However, this is not just a collection of baubles. Alongside the Grand Crus are wines from smaller villages such as St Romain and Auxey Duresses, as well as larger volume blends such as Bourgogne Rouge. Then, of course, there is his small but growing range of Domaine wines. He makes no distinction, however, in the treatment of the wines based on ownership source or appellation hierarchy: if Ben is to put his name on the label, it simply needs to be as good as it can be. As if his wine skills weren't enough, Ben is also a natural communicator, seemingly as comfortable in front of famous journalists and demanding buyers as he is in the solitude of his cellar or among his vines. Working with someone like this, whose first instinct is always 'yes' and 'why not?' is a total pleasure, particularly when coupled with such fantastic quality.

