



CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

DOMAINE LAFARGE-VIAL



**IN THE SPRING OF 2014,
FRÉDÉRIC AND CHANTAL
LAFARGE DECIDED TO
LAUNCH A NEW PROJECT:
THE CREATION OF A NEW
DOMAINE IN BEAUJOLAIS.**



DOMAINE
LAFARGE
VIAL

One can understand their timing. In Volnay, their vineyards had been hit hard by hail in 2012 and 2013 (and would be again in 2014) and land prices had been rising relentlessly in the Côte d'Or for many years, meaning expansion closer to home was very difficult.

At around an hour's drive away, Beaujolais was both a practical choice and more importantly was showing signs of emerging from the doldrums, particularly helped by a strong trio of vintages in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Lastly, the family had experience of working with Gamay in Burgundy and had always been fascinated by Beaujolais' mosaic of crus.

Having taken the decision, they had the good fortune to find a winery building available in Fleurie together with 2.5ha of vines which has since increased to 5.5ha. The parcels cover three appellations: Fleurie, Chiroubles and Côte de Brouilly and they christened the new project Lafarge-Vial, reflecting Chantal's involvement through her maiden name.

The old vines that were on their land were in good condition, trained in the Gobelet style but due to their advanced age, they typically yield only 25-30 hl/ha when many in the appellation would expect double.

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Low yields are something they are well used to and as in Volnay, they work biodynamically. The slopes are too steep for mechanisation, so all the work is done by hand and horse. At harvest time, everything is hand-picked and then sorted and destemmed using traditional wicker pans. This is intensive, committed and expensive work, reflecting the passion and dedication for their new baby.

Vinification is done in concrete tanks and may include stems between 15% and 25%. There is no carbonic macération here: this is Beaujolais vinification as it was practised traditionally. Fermentation takes place over 10-15 days with a light extraction and an old vertical press is used which also helps to avoid reduction in the wines. The wines are then transferred to 350 litre barrels or to larger foudres, without any new oak at all, where malolactic fermentation takes place followed by two rackings and bottling around 14 months later, without either fining or filtration.

At present, five wines are produced. The first is a Chiroubles from 45 year-old vines in a straight, approachable style for earlier drinking. Next

comes a blended Fleurie from two parcels near to the winery buildings in the lieu-dit Bel-Air, a wine of a little more ambition and scale. Then we move up a gear with two single site Fleuries. 'Clos Vernay' is a 1.3ha 'Clos' towards the border with Moulin à Vent on granitic-quartz soils in a very focused, mineral style. 'La Joie du Palais' is from a steep hillside vineyard with lovely old vines at higher elevation and only workable by horse.

The final wine in the line-up is a magnificent Côte de Brouilly, from grapes grown on granitic soils with important bluestone and iron elements presents. It is a bigger, more ample wine with considerable keeping potential.

This is clearly still a young operation but with the expertise and commitment of the Lafarges behind it, the wines are already turning heads. Frédéric advises that the sweet spot is generally between three and eight years after the vintage, depending on the cuvée and of course individual preferences.

