



CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

DOMAINE LEFLAIVE



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While there have been Leflaives in Puligny Montrachet for over 300 years, the story of the Domaine as we know it today really begins, as with so many, in the aftermath of phylloxera when Joseph Leflaive was able to buy vineyards at a time when their upkeep was a burden and their profitability a distant dream. Thanks to his careful acquisitions of outstanding buildings and the foresight to impose a legal structure that keeps it all intact, over a century later his descendants enjoy a position as guardians of the greatest white wine estate in the world. Such a privileged birthright, however, inevitably brings great responsibility and considerable expectation.

The new team at Domaine Leflaive are fully up to the challenge. The most recent vintages show that the Leflaive magic is alive and well and the Domaine in very good hands. Those hands belong to Brice de la Morandière, who took the helm after the early and tragic loss of his aunt, Anne-Claude Leflaive in 2014, herself a legendary figure at both the Domaine and in the wider world of wine, particularly for her pioneering stance on the adoption of biodynamics.

Despite being born into a pre-eminent wine family, Brice's professional background is in international business. He has spent much of his career overseas, revelling in the challenge of running a number



of firms such as a hydraulic business in places as far apart as China, Turkey and the USA. His expertise also extends to academia, where he lectures at Oxford University Business School. Since his return to Puligny, he has thrown himself into the challenge that his birthright demands, despite the very obvious contrast in working environment.

Brice's own professional success, his acknowledged leadership ability and his intellectual capacity made him the obvious choice to assume the role as Managing Partner. However, there was never any question of him accepting the status quo- if you stand still, others will go past

you. His arrival at the Domaine has seen every part of the process taken apart, inspected and investigated with the sole objective of finding the room for improvement. Finding dozens of small things to improve by 1 or 2% was the aim and found them he has. With a new régisseur at his side in Pierre Vincent, the results are exciting and will provide the platform for renewed success at this global leader.

To the Domaine itself: covering almost 25 hectares in the Côte d'Or, with a further 24 hectares in the Mâconnais, the estate nevertheless manages to retain the feel of a family enterprise despite its size. From its home in the heart of Puligny-Montrachet,



all of the original Domaine holdings are close by, as are the winemaking facilities and other Domaine buildings.

At the entry level, the Bourgogne Blanc, produced entirely from vines within the commune of Puligny-Montrachet, is already exceptional for its level, a pattern that is continued by the village Puligny, blended from five separate holdings that cover the breadth of the village and come together to form perhaps its most exemplary example.

High up on the hillside in the hamlet of Blagny and therefore falling within the boundaries of Meursault, is a substantial holding of Meursault 1er cru

Sous le Dos d'Ane, that was converted from Pinot Noir vines in two phases in 1996 and 2004. With demand for the white wines of the Domaine as fierce as it is, it is perhaps no surprise that the Domaine elected to do this and the wine itself is certainly fine and occasionally steely. However, there is still a tinge of regret around this decision, not least from family members who miss having a red wine to enjoy from their own vineyards.

The four Puligny 1er crus make for a fascinating quartet. Most important, in terms of production size, is Clavoillon, a wine which improved greatly under Anne-Claude Leflaive and continues on an upward trajectory today.

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Previously regarded as a little heavy and lacking in flair, today's versions show energy, vigour and even elegance and it now comfortably holds its own in the line-up.

Higher up the slopes, with an easterly exposure is Folatières, where the Domaine holds 1.26ha. This is always an accessible, relatively showy wine but not at the expense of depth and complexity, which it acquires steadily over the mid-term. Moving north to the Meursault border is Combettes, sometimes considered the odd-man-out owing to its richness that is more akin to the stereotype of great Meursault than the heightened floral elegance of the best Pulignys. Sitting a notch above all three, however, is Les Pucelles, where

the Domaine owns a little over 3 ha. In any other Domaine this would be shown as a Grand Cru, in the same way that Rousseau would show Clos St Jacques after some of his Grand Crus, for example. It is a wine that requires patience, its mineral backbone holding it straight and firm while the rest of the wine slowly comes together to form its final, beautiful image.

At the Grand Cru level, it is hard not to get a little giddy with excitement. At the top of the tree is a tiny slither of precious Montrachet, scarcely enough to yield a single barrel in some vintages but considered by many as perhaps the greatest white wine of them all. Above this on the hillside, the Domaine holds a substantial 2ha presence in Chevalier-Montrachet, an

ethereal, appropriately noble wine that frequently outclasses many a Montrachet. In Bâtard-Montrachet, there are a further 2ha of vines, split over four parcels and capable of producing one of the most characterful and fascinating wines in the cellar. Tucked just beneath is an important holding of Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet, featuring some of the oldest vines in the Domaine. The wine is often a little more compact than its more extroverted neighbour but certainly its equal in terms of its ability to age and its mineral depth.

Since 2014, all of Domaine Leflaive's wines have been bottled under DIAM cork. The team believe this is a vital weapon in the fight to preserve freshness in the wines and to prevent early,

or premature, oxidation. The decision is in line with many leading white wine estates who have made a similar move. While these great white burgundies can give enormous pleasure in their youth, their reputation over their long and distinguished history is intrinsically linked to their ability to improve and develop complexity with age. There can surely be few more life-affirming experiences for the wine-drinker than drinking a great cru from Puligny-Montrachet at its apogee, particularly one from its greatest producer.

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