



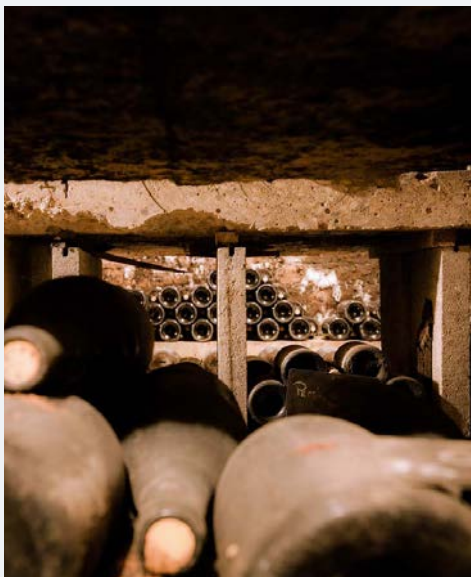
CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

DOMAINE SIMON BIZE



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Simon Bize & Fils

Travelling through the vineyards of Burgundy, it is not uncommon to see groups of tourists clustered around its vinous landmarks. The vines of Montrachet, Romanée-Conti et al must be some of the most photographed plants in the world. Spare a thought, then, for the likes of Savigny-lès-Beaune. Tucked away behind the 'front-line' villages and without any grands crus, villages such as Savigny do not enjoy international fame and recognition and must fight to be heard.

While skill is certainly required to ensure that a Montrachet or Musigny worthy of its name is produced, it takes a special talent

and commitment to make great wine in less-exalted terroirs. Simon Bize founded his family Domaine in 1880 in the middle of the phylloxera crisis: certainly a time of opportunity for this savoyard but unquestionably also a move that must have required great courage and commitment. Through two world wars, those same family traits enabled subsequent generations to protect and to grow the Domaine. In the 1950s, the family made the big leap to Domaine bottling, putting their name on their work for the first time and rejecting the relative comfort of selling to the négoce.

It was Patrick Bize, however, who cemented the reputation

of the Domaine and raised it to the level of flagship for the appellation. Initially uninterested in wine, and with no formal training, he had nonetheless answered the call to return to his family Domaine in 1972. Already in the 1980s, the wines of Savigny were achieving sums greater than those of Beaune, much to the consternation of the Beaunois and it was Patrick who lead the charge. Over more than forty vintages, he worked tirelessly to raise the profile of both Savigny and the Domaine until his tragic, early death in 2013. A true one-off character, he is sorely missed.

Thanks to his ability and talent, but also as a result of his sense of fun, humour and loyalty, Patrick enjoyed the respect and friendship of some of Burgundy's most celebrated names. He remained, however, one of the most modest and self-effacing characters you could meet.

Today, his legacy is being carried forward by his widow, Chisa with the aide of friends and family, including Patrick's sister, Marielle Grivot.

This new chapter for the Domaine could yet be its most

remarkable. Trying to express sufficient admiration for Chisa's strength and resolve is always hopeless. A native of Japan who met Patrick when he needed a guide/translator on a market visit there, Chisa found herself in Burgundy due to the mysterious forces of love and fate. Raising two children in traditional, agricultural France is already an enormous achievement. To become a widow in such brutal circumstances and yet to resolve to not only carry on the family's work but to set about elevating it deserves the highest of plaudits. In her own quiet, contemplative way she has rethought much of what is practised at the Domaine, embracing organic and biodynamic methods as well as finding her own solutions, all focused on restoring plant health and balance for the benefit of the fruit and therefore the wines. Her results so far are truly wonderful.

At just under 24 hectares, the Domaine is substantial for a family enterprise. Chisa's abilities in both cellar and vineyard are quite remarkable as is her talent in running an important Domaine. With the exception of



a tiny 0.4ha parcel of Latricières-Chambertin, all of the Domaine's holdings are in Savigny and around the neighbouring hill of Corton. Tasting the six premiers crus in the cellar is a wonderful tour of the village: from the cooler north-east facing Marconnets on the Beaune side, to the south-facing Guettes and Serpentières across the valley on the Pernand side and then as the hill turns south-east, one finds Fournaux further down the hill, Talmettes just underneath the wood and then finally perhaps the most complete wine of the appellation- and the Domaine Bize flagship- Les Vergelesses. The classic mistake is to think of Savigny-lès-Beaune wines

as somehow lighter and for early drinking. For certain, this style exists in the appellation but wines of the pedigree of Vergelesses, for example, can age effortlessly for many decades. Patrick and Chisa were always exceptionally generous hosts and memories of the family's wines from the 1960s and 1970s always more than proved this point.

