

LOUIS JADOT SCHOLARSHIP
2008

Maison Jadot is regarded as one of the great Burgundian Wine Houses, founded in 1859 by Louis Henry Denis Jadot, it remained in the family until 1985, when the last remaining member of the family still involved in Maison Jadot, Madame Jadot, decided to sell the company in order to preserve its independence.

The family of Rudy Kopf (the owners of the US importer of Jadot wines), brought the firm, and in whose hands it still remains today, as a proud private firm not beholdng to the greed of the shareholder or the vagaries of the stock market.

Approaching its 150 year birthday, it is still at the forefront of innovation, yet embodies all the proud history of the company and the region.

Having been fortunate to recently visit Burgundy as a guest of Maison Jadot, and not only see the Jadot operation at close hand, but also see all those famous vineyards of the region that evoke such passion and produce some of the greatest wines in the world. Here is my impression of Jadot.

There is the impressive modern technological winery, which is at the forefront of wine production in Burgundy, and is still developing. It has been designed with the grape and the environment in mind, and the next development will see a separate area of production for the white wines, each winery will be temperature controlled for the benefit of the grapes and to produce the best wines possible.

This paired with the heritage of the company embodied by the cellars where all their wines are matured stretching under the streets of Beaune, like a maze and hold wines that date back over 200 years. These wines will never be sold on the open market, the company philosophy of producing wines that reflect the grape and the terroir and selling them in chosen markets to chosen customers means they will never loose the mystic and heritage the company and its wines have. They, for example, mainly sell to the off trade in France in order to maintain control and exclusivity.

Owning 154 hectares across the Côte d'Or, Mâconnais and the Beaujolais, as well as having long term contracts with growers in many areas allows them to produce wines of all quality levels and from many different areas.

But all this is not what left a lasting impression.

They are one of the few Burgundian Houses that have ventured into Beaujolais, firstly buying Château des Jacques in 1996 with its 35 hectares, then increasing it to 70 hectares in 2001. Producing Cru Beaujolais wines from all the major cru areas of Beaujolais, and run under the supervision of Jadot's head wine maker Jacques Lardière by Guillaume de Castelnau.

It is here that Jadot is leading the way. Beaujolais is currently going through a bit of a mini revolution, having fallen behind many of the wine regions of France, both in terms of quality of wine and reputation it is starting to fight back.

While there 4 of the bigger Beaujolais producers held a joint press conference, albeit only for the regional journalists, to highlight the desire from all to promote the region and improve both the quality and standing of the wines. This is a small but significant step forward, for up to now although respect amongst the producers was there co-operation was not.

The promotion of Beaujolais is not just lying with the wine producers, the towns and villages are joining in. New restaurants, hotels and B&B's are opening up, all to attract tourists and money to the region.

Maison Jadot, is leading the way in the wine world. Through the leadership of head winemaker Jacques Lardière the philosophy of using nature to produce the best wines, that are a true reflection of the grape, the soil and the place of origin.

Guillaume de Castelnau, a true enthusiast for bio-dynamics, is creating a revolution in the Beaujolais vineyards of Jadot.

Throughout the vineyards of northern Beaujolais across the famous cru villages the difference Castelnau is making can easily be seen.

In order to re-establish the reputation of Beaujolais wines, and show the world that serious wine can be made. To break away from the stereotypical soft juicy confected red fruit flavoured wines that are to be drunk young that are associated with Beaujolais, Guillaume is breaking with tradition.

The methods of vine management associated with Beaujolais are bush, goblet trained vines, which are relatively widely planted apart. The desire is to produce the maximum permitted yield possible, which often leads to excessive numbers of grape bunches, so a green harvest is often required, and if this is miss-managed in turn, Guillaume believes, affects the wines produced, leading to wines that lack flavour, intensity and complexity.

With this in mind, and the need to maximise the quality of the grapes produced, the methods of vineyard management associated with the Côte d'Or are now seen in the vineyards of Jadot. Wires and guyot pruned vines clearly stand out amongst the sea of vineyards across the region.

This is no more clearly seen than in the vineyards of Moulin-à-Vent, where Guillaume is putting into practice all his beliefs.

Having seen the vineyards at close hand what was more surprising than anything, and which would appear to be alien to the English philosophy of "An English man's home is his castle" (every piece of his land is clearly marked and protected with fences, walls or hedges). The vineyards here are anything but defined, for Jadot has lines of vines right next to those of a neighbour, then some more on the other side of those. There is no clear marking of whose is whose, where the land of one owner ends and where another's begin, tradition and honesty are the guides to land ownership.

The vines that Guillaume tends in Moulin-à-Vent, are well maintained with wires and trellising, the vines are all healthy, their canopy and the grapes are well away from the floor, while those of his neighbour are the complete opposite. They are close to the floor, the canopy is closed, the grapes are ill formed and there are some dead vines within the rows.

When you see the differences between the vines and the rows the benefits appear obvious, but what are they?

Guillaume explained the benefits.

By using the trellising and vine training techniques used throughout the rest of Burgundy not only benefits the vine, allowing them to grow strong and keep the all important growing parts of the vine above ground, the leaves and grapes away from the ground and the threat of flooding which can be a real problem in Beaujolais, as the soils sit on a base of hard granite which having poor drainage capabilities means water often sits on the surface flooding the vines or carrying the soil away down the slopes during down pours.

Growing the vines on wires also means that come harvest the grapes are much more easily and efficiently gathered, all important as the grapes are hand harvested and the need to get them to the winery quickly is vital as well as reducing the costs of labour. The soil is well cared for. Guillaume is passionate about the land he believes it has an energy that you can feel, it is alive and should be treated with the same respect the

vines get. He avoids compacting it as much as possible, so allowing the roots to breath, drainage to be efficient and nutrients to easily filter into the soil. Cover crops are used to add the all important nutrients to the soil, and the use of rose bushes at the end of rows of vines helps keep unwanted pests away from the vines and also work as an early warning system to potential hazards that may affect the vines.

Guillaume's passion for bio-dynamics is very clear here, he only uses specially prepared natural pesticides and feeds for the vines (one great tip he passed on was the use of a "nettle soup" to help control slug damage). They are only applied at certain times of the day and year, pruning, canopy management and soil enhancement is done in line with the seasons and even the phases of the moon.

This philosophy is carried through into the winery. "The wine is alive" and is treated with the same respect as the vine itself.

The fermenting wine is like a baby, it needs constant attention, the temperature has to be right and the food (in this case the yeasts) must be right to ensure good growth. Just as a child grows and changes, so does a wine, in youth things are simple and straight forward and change happens quickly. When things are changed it is a shock to the wine just as it is a shock to a child when it starts school, and it takes time to adjust and settle down again. Moving the wine to the correct storage vessel is very important, and must suit that particular wine, the type, size and level of toasting of the barrel is carefully chosen.

Then moving it to the bottle is just like the teenager, it will sulk, with draw and fight against its surroundings. It is not ready to be drunk and will need time to grow and develop into a true expression of what the wine can be, just as a young adult becomes valuable to society.

Then through the correct storage the wine matures, benefits from experience and time to become a truly great wine.

Guillaume is determined to show the world what Beaujolais wine is all about and what it can become.

Tasting both the young and aged cru Beaujolais that are produced at Château des Jacques it is completely unrecognisable to the average Beaujolais wines that you see on the shelves of the retailers in the UK.

They have a depth, concentration and complexity that is normally associated with wines that have a greater reputation. Even the aged wines some dating back some 15 to 20 years still have a good balance of fruit, oak and tannins that make them very approachable.

With the skills, passion and enthusiasm that Guillaume Castelnau is showing, backed by the history, philosophy, standing and money of Jadot, Beaujolais and its' wines are sure to gain the respect and following they deserve.