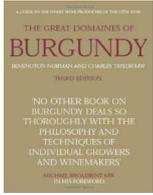


DOMAINE BITOUZET-PRIEUR - VOLNAY



Vincent Bitouzet took charge here in 1981, the fifth generation since Simon Bitouzet came to Volnay in 1860. Marriage to Hubert Prieur's daughter, Annie, a distant relation to the Prieurs of Domaine Jacques Prieur added 3 ha of Meursault and 1 ha of Beaune to his 7 ha of mostly Volnay. The Bitouzet whites are vinified at the Prieur family house in Meursault, while the reds are vinified behind the Bitouzet house in Volnay.

Since 2005, Vincent and Annie's son, François, has increasingly taken responsibility for the wine making, leaving his father looking after the vines and administration.

Over the past fifteen years, the domaine has become increasingly more respectful of the soil and environment. In the 1990s, the entire estate was treated with weed-killers whereas now all the vineyards are ploughed. Systemic fungicides have been eliminated and the use of chemical fertilisers greatly reduced. In 2009, 2 ha were converted to organic viticulture and, if successful, the experiment will be extended.

Much time is now spent in the vineyards during summer, removing side-shoots and excessive bunches. This has reduced yields, increased maturity and reduced the incidence of botrytis, creating a virtuous circle of later harvests and riper, healthier grapes. In particular, the phenolic ripeness has been enhanced, which helps the Bitouzets to decide when to harvest.

Once picked, the Pinot Noir bunches are sorted on a "table de tri", destemmed and put into the vast uncrushed. After 3-7 days cold maceration, the grapes are fermented by the indigenous yeasts at a maximum of 34°C. François prefers a long, gentle extraction so has reduced the amount of "pigeage" from twice a day to once every two days. The reds stay in cask for 12-15 months before being bottled with a light "filtration lenticulaire" but without fining.

The use of new oak is carefully judged with no more than 30% for the Volnay "premiers crus". Of these the most forward is the delicious Les Aussy. The 50-year-old Bitouzet vines show how good is the lesser-known "premier cru" can be. The stony, Taillepieds soil gives a more serious wine with more guts and tannin and a drier finish. It needs either foods or time to show at its best. More generous with complexe, spicy fruit is Les Pitures, a vineyard adjacent to Angerville's Clos des Ducs with marly soil. It has a fine, close-knit texture, combining elegance with length on the palate. Le Clos des Chênes, a flatter vineyard with a heavier clay soil is reserved, full and tannic and requires more patience. Finally, Bitouzet's Caillerets is quintessential Volnay, rich and sweet with depth and silky tannins. Unfortunately the domaine possesses only 0.15 ha, enough for a mere two barrels.

The Chardonnay grapes are grushed then pressed as François likes a certain amount of solid matter. He has a traditional Vaslin press and a modern pneumatic one. He intends to slip the 2009 Meursault Corbins grapes between the two presses and keep the juices apart throughout the winemaking so that he can see if there is a significant difference in style or quality.

Usually, there is a brief “débourage” to eliminate the heaviest lees before juice is fermented using the indigenous yeasts in a mixture of Allier and Vosges barrels from local “tonnelleries” including Damy, Gillet, François and Seguin-Moreau. The village Meursault sees 20% new oak, the “premiers crus” 33%. Vincent and François are not keen on “bâtonnage”, preferring a longer ageing on the lees to regular stirring. Of the two adjacent village Meursaults, Les Corbins is bright and fruity – delicious for early drinking. Le Clos du Cromin is a more four-square, with more weight, a denser texture and greater ageing potential.

In 1998, the domaine inherited a parcel of Puligny-Montrachet Les Levrons from François’s grandmother. Half the plot needed replanting so the blend has a significant proportion of the young vines. Nonetheless it is a crisp, fresh, mineral Puligny.

Of the Meursault premiers crus, Santenots is full and intense but lacks the finesse of the domaine’s Charmes, a blend of vines from the top and bottom of the vineyard. Finest of all is Les Perrières from vines on the Puligny border, an elegant, reserved wine with great intensity and length. This is an excellent, well-run domaine making increasingly fine wines.

Vineyards Holdings

Appellation	Level	Climat/Cru	Area (ha)	Ave Age of Vines
Beaune	PC	Les Cent Vignes	1.26	1987 & 1988
Meursault	PC	Les Charmes	0.55	1944 & 1987
Meursault	PC	Les Perrières	0.28	1983
Meursault	PC	Les Santenots	0.20	1971
Volnay	PC	Les Aussy	0.51	1956 & 1998
Volnay	PC	Les Caillerets	0.15	1981
Volnay	PC	Les Clos des Chênes	0.54	1976, 1982, 1986
Volnay	PC	Les Mitans	0.13	1991
Volnay	PC	Les Pitures	0.5	1959, 1969, 1974 & 2005
Volnay	PC	Les Taillepieds	0.72	1971, 1983, 1997
Meursault	V	Les Corbins	1.50	1974, 1978, 1987
Meursault	V	Les Dressoles	0.84	1971 & 1985
Meursault	V	Les Levrons	0.37	1951
Puligny-Montrachet	V	Les Aussy	0.60	1955 & 2000
Volnay	V	Les Ez Echard	1.01	1961, 1987, 2003
Volnay	V	Les Petits Gamets	1.00	1974, 1991, 1992
Volnay	V		0.20	1990
Bourgogne Aligoté	R		0.40	1954
Bourgogne Blanc	R		0.71	1953, 2010 (planned)
Bourgogne Passetoutgrains	R		0.50	1953 & 1974
Bourgogne Rouge	V		1.20	1963, 1969, 1970
		TOTAL	13.17	