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Domaine Lucie et Auguste Lignier

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2005

Morey St.-Denis "1er" Vieilles-Vignes

barrel

1er Cru Red

Note: a blend of two *lieux-dits* with 50 to 100 year old vines, Les Faconnières and Les Chenevery

Producer note: If you have the sensation that you're looking at the range of wines that used to be released by Domaine Hubert Lignier, you're right, you are - except that things are not that simple. Unfortunately family feuds can also occur anywhere in the world and Burgundy is no exception. And at present, this circumstance has become the Burgundian equivalent of the Hatfields and the McCoys, dividing the sleepy little town of Morey unlike any recent drama that I've seen. Everyone seems to have a view as to who is right (and who's not), from producers to Lignier's American importer, indeed even another well known critic that I discussed this with had taken sides! Fans of the domaine will remember that Hubert's son Romain, who tragically died at a very early age two years ago, left an American wife Kellen and two small children. It seems that Mrs. Lignier wishes to continue in her husband's footsteps and make the wine until her children, Lucie and Auguste (hence the name of the domaine) are old enough to take over. Mrs. Lignier has very little practical winemaking experience though has made, according to many people familiar with the situation, an extraordinary effort to acquire same, even doing a brief internship at the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti among other activities. From what was explained to me, it further appears that M. Lignier has a different view of the wisdom of this approach and has elected to take back the vineyards that were not fully transferred to his son prior to his death and found a new domaine called Hubert Lignier Père et Fils; apparently there will also be a minor négociant activity as well which will enable Hubert to purchase fruit from Kellen. As one might reasonably suspect, there is a good deal more to this story than propriety allows me to feel comfortable disclosing but suffice it to say that one hopes the spirit of cooperation will reign supreme in the end and inure to the benefit of both parties.

With respect to the wines reviewed below, they are a joint effort of sorts. Both the 2004s and 2005s were vinified by Hubert. Kellen bottled the 2004s and will bottle the 2005s. What is not completely clear is whether any of these wines will also be released by Hubert, either under the old label of Hubert Lignier or under his new label. Presumably if he does release any of them, they will be available through his long-time importers. To further complicate matters, Mrs. Lignier does not yet have importers for any major markets and thus it's not a certainty that the wines will be released and in fact they may be sold to a négociant, which could include M. Lignier. If you're not confused by all of this, congratulations!

Tasting note: A touch of reduction detracts mildly from the earthy and slightly *sauvage* dark berry fruit nose complemented by touches of underbrush and minerals that merge into rich, full and robust flavors that possess ample punch and a certain taut muscularity on the long and mouth coating finish. I like the depth of material here and this should age well.

Tasted: Jan 01, 2007

Score: 90-92

Drink: 2013+

- Comments: Outstanding!

Issue 25

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THE DOMAINE



Domaine Hubert Lignier long had the reputation of being a fine address for concentrated and supple wines - pushed in no small part by a young critic by the name of Robert M Parker. Romain made some some winemaking changes but had no problem retaining and indeed ever-widening the circle of followers. Today, the un-signposted, and relatively newly named Domaine Lucie et Auguste Lignier adjoins the Hotel-Restaurant Castel de Très Girard - it's in Morey St.Denis but quietly away from the main

thoroughfare of the Route des Grands Crus. It seemed from both Kellen's bottling area and her cellar that space is at a premium, particularly if you see her planning the easiest route to negotiate to her target barrels. If I make it sound disorganised, it's not, it's just that there's rather a lot crammed into these 18th century cellars - and that's following a 2001 extension for the 1999 vintage - before which, Romain had wine dotted throughout Morey.

Despite the age and utilisation of the cellars, Kellen seems to have a bee in her bonnet about cleanliness and points to recent remedial work in the cellar to solve an un-specified problem - solved with the help of friends from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. It's not just hygiene in the cellar either, she is the same with her harvest - every bunch is 'sniffed' to make sure there is no bacterial spoilage. I think this attention to hygiene detail was clearly enhanced by her time at that Vosne domaine.

WINEMAKING

Over his 10+ years of taking more and more control of the winemaking, Romain mainly looked to increase the length of pre-fermentation maceration, believing it was better to extract here rather than during the fermentation as preferred by his father. The grapes are destemmed before a fermentation mediated by natural, local yeasts and takes place in open-top cement tanks. Romain and friends used to do the pigeage the traditional way - bare legs and all. There is a cold soak maceration period prior of around 5 days prior to fermentation. Fermentation tends to be relatively long, generally lasting around 15 to 20 days. Kellen now (hygiene in mind) covers her tanks,

but retains the 'manual push-downs'. There is restrained use of new oak for the élevage, typically 20-30% for the villages wines, ~50% for the premiers and 90% for the grand crus. Total élevage of ~18 months for the villages wines and 20-24 months for the higher appellations before being bottled. Racking is avoided where possible and as Kellen puts it "*fining and filtering of reds are still rather frowned upon...*".

For the 2004 and 2005 vintages it was Bill Downie currently senior wine-maker at de Bortoli (and manager of his own domaine) in Australia who helped with the winemaking. Downie had already spent time working at both Domaine Fourrier and Domaine Hubert Lignier (with Romain) and was well-placed to help-out. For the 2006 and 2007 harvests Kellen chose to bolster her own courage with the aid of a 'flying oenologist', Robert Vernizeau from the Domaine des Perdrix, "I feel more comfortable with him there, I could have done it my self, but I value the second opinion and counsel" - Kellen also points out that he doesn't need to fly from Nuits!

THE WINES

Despite the background differences or politics - call it what you will - what remains is a high-quality address. 2006 required hard work significantly beyond the 'easy' 2005 vintage so is a better barometer of 'producer quality'. Here you will find wines that run from good to excellent - indeed covetable!

I note some blocky tannins on a few (only) Morey's - and this is anyway the reputation of the village - but I think this 'tackiness' or 'grab' is as much as anything a vintage characteristic as I've found it in a number of cuvées up and down both Côtes. Still, a couple of years in bottle and it should be past history.

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IN THIS AUTUMN ISSUE

- Editorial
- 05-07 Vintage Viewpoint
- 58 x 2005's in 2 hours
- Vincent et Denis Berthaut
- Lucie et Auguste Lignier
- Remoissenet Père et Fils
- Thomas-Moillard
- Roundup of All Tasted



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2006 Bourgogne

From vines in Flagey and Chambolle. Medium colour. A nicely high-toned and wide nose of faintly blue-shaded fruit. The very fresh, clean and detailed but just a little tart after the lunchtime creme brulee - try to pair with something else! Quite nice for the appellation - it will be interesting to see prices.

2006 Chambolle-Musigny

From vines bordering Morey St.Denis Les Porroux and 1er cru Clos de la Bussière. Some reduction that slowly blows away providing ever-redder elements. Lovely detail again with bright acidity. Nicely textured with a good finish. The last drops in the glass have a lovely aroma of red berries.

2006 Morey St.Denis Les Sionnières

From 35 year-old vines that are actually right in front of the Castel Très Girard. Faint reduction lifts to show lovely red berry-fruit aromas. The palate is fresh, the acidity being just a little better covered by the fruit than the last two. The tannins are just a little blocky - as they often can be from young Morey. Overall this is a good wine that will need the tannin to soften for a measure of elegance.

2006 Morey St.Denis

The scents start very diffuse but it doesn't need too long to tighten - it really blossoms in the glass, becoming deeper and riper. Again it's fresh, showing lovely fruit and, once-more those slightly blocky tannins. Another good effort here.

2006 Gevrey-Chambertin

Fresh and wide, the nose has a little chocolate covered marzipan. The palate showing finer tannins and just a little more minerality versus the last wines. The acidity brings a nice kick at the end. This is rather long for a 'simple' villages. Very good quality here.

2006 Morey St.Denis 1er Cru, Les Chaffonts

This has a deeper and more intense nose than the villages Gevrey. The palate is fresh and interesting. This time the tannins are less 'blocky', there are still plenty of them and they have a little grain, but they are better presented. Lovely balance to the acidity. Good wine.

2006 Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru, Les Baudes

40+ year-old vines next to Bonnes-Mares. The nose shows real depth and a caramel edge. The palate is nicely mineral, backed by plenty of balanced tannin and acidity - there is a lovely persistence of flavour. An athletic pose here with real personality - lovely.

2006 Morey St.Denis 1er Cru, La Riotte

From 35 year-old vines. A dense fruit and rose-petal nose. In the mouth this is much fuller and denser than the previous 'Baudes', plenty of tannin, but not too blocky. The last drops in the glass show a beautiful red berry aroma.

2006 Morey St.Denis 1er Cru, Vieilles-Vignes Cuvée Romain Lignier

A blend of 50 & 100 year-old vines. Redcurrants with a twist of toffee-caramel on the nose. Really excellent texture here - much the best of the 'Moreys'. There is density and understated acidity coupled to an engaging length. Tiny note but great wine - very impressive.

2006 Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Cru, Aux Combottes

From 40+ year-old vines towards the top of the slope. A silky, wide nose with plenty of top notes. Super texture without fat; silky, plenty of fine grained tannin and a real extra depth of fruit going into the mid-palate. Lingers on the the palate. Lovely.

2006 Clos de la Roche Grand Cru

From 35-45 yo vines. Good depth on the nose, but it's quite tight. Again there is a step-up in concentration and density - but it's lithe, with no extraneous fat. You have more of an impression of tannin rather than overt texture. Long, and remains well balanced despite the extra intensity. The last drops in the glass have opened out with nicely detailed red berry notes.

2006 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru

Only one barrel. The nose is just a little tight. The palate seems to match the Clos de la Roche for intensity, but today is less perfectly packaged, as the tannin has a little more structure and the acidity doesn't show the seamless characteristic of the Clos de la Roche. It's still a very good showing, but today the Clos de la Roche was just too good an act to follow...

Not tasted, but also in this cellar you will find Bourgogne Passetoutgrains and the considerably rarer Fixin Blanc.

Domaine Lucie et Auguste Lignier

r Très Girard
21220 Morey Saint Denis

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7 Comments so far

Phil November 30th, 2007 5:25 pm

Bill

any clue as to what makes up the Morey 1er VV ?

Phil

Lignier, Kellen December 1st, 2007 12:53 am

Phil, and Bill,

H. Lignier makes M1VV, I make M1RL, it is basically the same, that is to say grapes, but who does what with them is an interesting question, let's try it out in a couple of years. This "Cuvée" was names VV by an influential American Importer because the vines are old. It is an assembly of 2 1er Cru Vineyards, Les Faconnières and Les Chenevery. They are quite old, but as I was looking for a wine to honour my late husband, and a name for this wine, I decided upon "Romain Lignier". True some can't let go of the past, so I call it in the cave, AKA VV, But Romain was (more) beautiful than this wine and he loved it, why not let go a bit...

Phil December 1st, 2007 1:37 pm

Dear Kellen,

Please accept my apologies if my question was unthoughtfull, I have no axe to grind over what you choose to call your wines. My interest is in purely which 1er vineyards make up a given 1er sans climat wine. I had recalled (incorrectly) that there was some Gruenchers in this wine and it is that which I am interested to find. I know JP Magnien has some in his 1er sans climat but who else ? I wish you well with this and all your other wines I hope to try them on my next visit to Morey.

Phillip

Lignier, Kellen December 1st, 2007 5:09 pm

With pleasure Phillip, Bill can put you into contact with me. Sorry about the seemingly terse reply...

K

Coco Lawton February 5th, 2008 5:42 am

Wonderful wonderful. Tell me about your Fixin. I know that Romain had bought or made part of that terroir, so any informatlon would be welcome. Enjoyed the Fixin this past January, by the way.

Lignier, Kellen March 26th, 2008 9:54 pm

Coco, I don't know about the "terroir of Fixin, except that it has existed for several (hundreds) of years... Romain planted these vines in 2001, I helped by trimming the roots on the grafts. Fixin is one of the few villages in the Côtes de Nuits that may grow a reasonably decent Chardonnay. I like this wine, but am still exploring it's possibilities, the vines are young, too young to make an excellent wine, but healthy and productive. in 2006, I fermented the wine in 300 L barrels, not having adequate vessels for these wines available. I didn't stir the wines during the aging to try to keep the minerality that I appreciate in Chardonnays. For me, this is a

"fun" wine, I like the idea that I may experiment without too many repercussions. We like to drink it ourselves, and don't care if we have not sold it ourselves.

Alan Weinberg April 21st, 2008 4:24 pm

Kellen: I visited your domaine and met your husband Romain several years ago. It was a highlight of a great Burgundy trip. I have cellared various H. Lignier wines since the 90 vintage. I wish you all the luck in the world holding onto the domaine, developing your winemaking skills, and preserving your husband's legacy for your children and the world. There are a lot of people in the wine world who feel similarly. Belated condolences to you and your family.

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