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Thoroughbred

There are men and there are boys and there are varying degrees of competence and flair and all sorts within, or on top of, that calibration. This counts for winemakers too.

A few months back I was asked by a friend: who is your favourite Burgundian winemaker of all time? This is a close one. I have always admired Jacques-Frederic Mugnier: I love his wines (his Le Musigny quite possibly the most elysian wine I can think of), I respect his lack of ego, I pine for his wisdom each time I visit (I missed 2010 and went next door instead and can't help but think I swapped Aretha for Kylie). Mr Mugnier (why do so many people who have probably spoken to him just the once, probably just to say "could I try the Marechale please?" refer to him as Freddie?) was the obvious candidate.

But for reasons I will explain another time, the final answer was Dominique Lafon. Similar to JFM, Dominique Lafon has made some of the greatest bottles I have ever drunk. And though superficially quite the opposite of JFM in character (I'm not going to write it down but, well, Dominique isn't afraid of enjoying himself), he shares something critical as far as I'm concerned: he knows exactly what he is doing. He is the master. I am restraining myself from dropping into my native South London expletive to express their mastery but essentially they both know the score, to the minute, to the second.



Tweets

- [@winewomansong](#) I can do a pretty good one word review of almost anything, wine included [10 hours ago](#)
- Thoroughbred winemaking, thoroughbred wine: <http://t.co/gBjZXaJU> [12 hours ago](#)
- [@nealmartin](#) you remember 1964 on the other side of S

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A few weeks back I had one of the tastings of my life. Thirty-four wines, almost all from barrel. All Chardonnay, all Meursault, all from the same domaine, all made by Dominique Lafon. And all exceptional.

DL doesn't talk about his wines like he created them – he knows that as much as they may be works of art, he didn't actually create them. He talks about them as if they are racehorses. He's the trainer, maybe the jockey too. He knows how the vineyards work, he knows what he's got. "Il y a du terre, la" he says tasting a component part – the youngest vines – of what will become 2011 Meursault 1er cru Les Charmes. His point is that, despite the youth of the vines, there is depth, there is character.

Terroir is to a degree what Burgundy is all about: DL's plot of Charmes is clearly pretty special – think of young vines as a bad telephone line but crystal clear diction coming through – but I am just as much in the camp of those that go for the winemaker as being the key to the final product. In Domaine des Comtes Lafon you have the rare jackpot that is both: impeccable vineyards and a man who knows how to translate, how to train, their potential into true thoroughbreds. DL himself says "il y a du race la", which is to say "breeding".

My notes from this tasting are superficially pretty useless for the most part. As JFM says: good wines don't need long notes. But there are some cracking quotes which sum the wines up well. Montrachets aside DL's favourite of his vineyards is (I think) Perrieres and both 2009 and 2010 of this wine are crackers. My scratchy note on the 2010 reads:

"This has real Perrieres lift in the mouth. Coolness on the nose. And lovely at the end. Very, very Perrieres and very, very good. Lovely."

I don't need a long note because I can remember the moment and will continue to do so. But Dominique's addition sums it up:

"Il ya a du monde au balcon..."

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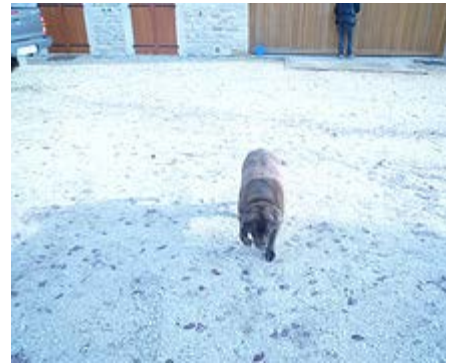


































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