



Louis Latour

wine review online.com

DON'T MISS MAISON LATOUR'S 2020 BURGUNDIES

MARCH 29, 2023

Founded in 1797 and still family owned and operated, Maison Louis Latour is one of Burgundy's top producers. In addition to their own 120 acres of vineyards (over half of which are Grand Cru, making them the largest owner of Grand Cru vineyards in Burgundy) they are one of Burgundy's best négociants as well. I've recently recommended the stunning 2020s from Domaine Louis Latour and now turn to their négociant bottlings, which are frequently underrated because they are from, well, a négociant—a merchant, rather than from a small grower.

In the past, some négociants gave the whole category of these houses a bad name by buying mediocre finished, but unlabeled, bottled wine, slapping their label on it, and selling it. Those days are long since over. I'm told that today's major négociants, such as Bichot, Boisset, Drouhin, Jadot, and Latour, do not buy finished bottled wine. They all buy grapes, or sometimes grape must, and then make, age, and bottle the wines themselves.

Latour, for example, has a dedicated winery in Pommard where a dedicated winemaker, Jean-Charles Thomas, carefully oversees the production of their négociant wines. Over the last couple of decades, the négociant concept has spread to small growers. Rock star-like producers, such as Méo-Camuzet, Benjamin Leroux, and Comtes Lafon to name just three, have all started their own négociant business to supplement their domaine holdings. And some big-name producers, whose wines sell out within hours of release, such as Lucien Lemoine, are entirely négociants, having no vineyards of their own. So, today the line between négociants and growers has become even more blurred.

I've said this before, but it's worth repeating: Latour's style of winemaking, firm rather than flamboyant, is a perfect fit for the fleshy wines the hot 2020 vintage produced. Latour has always favored well-structured wines that take time to open and reveal themselves. Their winemaking style changed when the 11th generation of the family, Louis-Fabrice Latour, took over in 1999. He extended the maceration just slightly to achieve a touch more intensity. Even with the change, Latour's reds, while a bit deeper, are still not flashy and voluptuous, but rather restrained and elegant. So, the extra ripeness of the 2020 vintage is a perfect fit for their winemaking philosophy.

Two advantages the prominent Beaune-based négociants offer consumers is availability and price. Latour, like the other top négociants, buys enough grapes from multiple growers to produce adequate volumes of wines that can be sold in multiple markets. We're not talking about hundred-case quantities from cult producers, six bottles of which wind up only in single stores in New York, Chicago, or Dallas. Latour's wines, as with those of other top négociants, can be found widely throughout the U.S. And though Burgundy is never inexpensive these days—some prices make my head spin—wines from the major négociants, Latour's included, are typically well-priced within the current context.

Latour succeeded across the appellational hierarchy, but their village wines are especially noteworthy in 2020. Village appellations are frequently overlooked as well-heeled Burgundy fanatics claw for the limited allocations of wines from premier and grand cru



vineyards, which together account only for about ten percent of Burgundy's entire production. With such limited supply and voracious worldwide demand, it's easy to see how prices for these exalted wines have made them accessible only to the "one-percenters." Village wines may lack the cachet, but they hold the same magic that attracts people to Burgundy—a sense of terroir. That is, wines made from the same grapes by the same winemaker grown in different vineyards taste different.

The wines from Marsannay, for example, are enchantedly different from those from the abutting village of Gevrey-Chambertin. Latour's village wines in 2020 show their origins sharply despite the warmth of the vintage. Excessive heat during the growing season can not only produce jammy wines, it can also blur the individuality of the terroir and make the wines taste similar. Not Latour's 2020s. Santenay clearly tastes like Santenay and Nuits-St. Georges tastes like Nuits St. George.



95 pts

MEURSAULT GOUTTE D'OR 2020

Goutte-d'Or, literally golden drop, is a smaller vineyard that sits at the northern end of the string of the main premier cru vineyards. Its cooler east-northeast orientation gives it an advantage in warm vintages. Latour hit a bull's eye with this finesse-filled wine, combining richness and depth with great energy and extraordinary length.



94 pts

CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET 2020

Latour's mineral-y 2020 is a delight, delivering a fresh stony character buttressed by mouth-watering acidity. Its finesse and prolonged length make you wonder whether they included some Premier Cru that they opted not to bottle separately.



93 pts

ST. VERAN "LES DEUX MOULINS" 2020

Latour's refined St. Veran "Les Deux Moulins," is an excellent place to start to explore this appellation. As much as I liked Latour Mâcon-Lugny, their St. Veran simply has more elegance and finesse to accompany its depth and vivacity.



91 pts

MÂCON-LUGNY "LES GENIÈVRES" 2020

Shows the perfect marriage of their style with the warmth of the vintage. It displays remarkably good density for the Mâconnais without a trace of heaviness thanks to the riveting acidity that imparts an uplifting character to the wine. Think of it as your go-to white this summer.



93 pts

NUITS-ST.-GEORGES 2020

Latour managed the tannins nicely in 2020, not obliterating them, but refining them, while maintaining the captivating wildness characteristic of the village's wines. The vintage provided sufficient density, so this youthful beauty is a balanced and quintessential example of Nuits-St.-Georges. An edgy freshness in its formidable length amplifies its character.



93 pts

SANTENAY 2020

Good depth—the warm vintage speaking again—augments its charm. Supple, fresh, and long, it's a delight now. Santenay reds can be a bit rustic. This one is not. Indeed, it is remarkably refined for a village Santenay. These days you rarely find this character and quality in Burgundy at this price.



92 pts

MARSANNAY 2020

Bright red cherry-like notes complement herbal ones. Suave tannins make it easy to enjoy young—even now. It displays real Côtes de Nuits character at a Côtes de Beaune price.



92 pts

MERCUREY 2020

There's great flesh on the bones. Dark cherry-like nuances persist into an exceptional finish. Its firmness—to be clear, it's not hard—makes it a lovely accompaniment to grilled meat this summer.