

# Maison Louis Latour Made Outstanding 2020s

December 21, 2022



By Michael Apstein

The 2020 vintage in Burgundy, currently on the market, is the third hot—temperature wise—vintage in a row. It's also a “hot” vintage judging from some critics’ reviews and retailers’ enthusiasm. Hot vintages are tricky, especially in Burgundy. The good news about growing seasons with hot, sun-drenched days is that the wines have ripe flavors and lack green, unripe ones and the accompanying palate-searing acidity. This is especially true for areas like Burgundy that traditionally—that is, before climate change—had a tough time ripening grapes. The downside of all this heat is that grapes can get a bit too ripe, which translates into wines with inadequate freshness from low acidity and wind up tasting heavy or jammy. Pinot Noir is especially sensitive to too much warmth because it loses its glorious perfume and subtlety in those conditions. Classic Burgundy, in my mind, has what I call “flavor without weight.” Too much heat during the growing season can obliterate their charms and make them weighty. Yes, you want ripeness in Burgundy, but then again, not too much. Excessive ripeness in Burgundy also blurs the differences among the appellations. The wines lose their focus as ripe flavors overwhelm the subtle differences that distinguish the terroirs one from another.

Vintages in which quality is so high you can practically choose with your eyes closed are rare in Burgundy. The 2010 and 2015 vintages for red Burgundies are excellent candidates for that kind of vintage. In my opinion, the 2020 vintage is not—precisely because of the heat.

All of which brings me to the striking success of Maison Latour’s 2020 Burgundies—both red and white. Latour’s style has always been to capture flavor and charm without going overboard. Their viticultural and winemaking practices favor maintaining vibrant acidity, which means that the 2020 vintage was perfect for their style of wines. Overall, Latour’s 2020s are fleshy and fresh with a clear definition of one appellation from another. They are structured, but not hard or astringent. Many are remarkably enjoyable now. I suspect they will remain that way for a year or so, close down for five or so years, and then start to re-emerge. Their balance suggests they have a long and complex life ahead of them.

Although Maison Latour is one of Burgundy’s venerable négociants—now under the leadership of the 12th generation of the Latour family—it is also an important grower, owning over 125 acres of vineyards, over half of which are Grand Cru. Those wines carry a circular label on the neck proclaiming *Domaine Louis Latour*. Christophe Diola is responsible for the *Domaine* wines, while Jean-Charles Thomas oversees the *négociant* wines.

Under the brilliant leadership of the late Louis-Fabrice Latour, who died in September at the age of 58, Latour shrewdly purchased *Domaine Simonnet-Febvre* in Chablis in 2003. Paul Espitalié does a fine job overseeing those wines.



# Maison Louis Latour Reds 2020s

December 21, 2022



95 pts

## Beaune Premier Cru Les Perrières 2020

The 7.5-acre *Les Perrières* vineyard lies high up on the slope in a cooler locale, which may help explain this wine's **bright energy**. Though tightly wound, as expected from a young top premier cru, its stature shows with gorgeous **mineral-scented** aromatics and impressive length. Engaging **red fruit flavors** intermingled with clear stony notes—the site was an ancient quarry—are clearly heard. Pure and precise, it's a winner.



95 pts

## Aloxe-Corton Premier Cru Les Chaillots 2020

Wines from Aloxe-Corton, even its premier crus, are overshadowed by Grand Cru Corton and overlooked by consumers. Do. Not. Overlook. This. Wine. Its fleshy body atop a firm frame of **iron-tinged flavors** identify it clearly as Aloxe-Corton. **Impeccably balanced** and **fresh**, it is **well-proportioned**, not over extracted or overdone. It's a mini-Corton that has the advantage that it will be approachable far sooner than its grand cru big brother.



92 pts

## Pommard Premier Cru Les Epenots 2020

More structured, befitting its appellation, this iron tinged Pommard Epenots is sturdy and broad, redolent of **dark fruits** and **minerals**. Though the tannins certainly speak, they are not aggressive.



94 pts

## Volnay Premier Cru En Chevret 2020

En Chevret, a highly regarded 1er Cru vineyard, sits adjacent to and just below Volnay Caillerets, a vineyard many consider to be Volnay's best. Latour's **suavely textured** 2020 En Chevret exemplifies the charm and seductive nature of wines from Volnay. **Floral, fresh**, long, it's captivating. In a word, wow.



97 pts

## Chateau Corton Grancey Grand Cru 2020

Corton Grancey, a Grand Cru and the flagship of Domaine Latour, is a blend of five of the Grand Cru lieux-dits of the hill of Corton: Bressandes, Perrières, Grèves, Clos de Roi, Chaumes. The proportion of each varies year to year, depending on the vintage. The name, Grancey, comes from the last owners of the château before the Latour family purchased it in 1891. Château Grancey, a classic multi-storied Burgundian building complete with circular staircases situated in the middle of the Corton vineyards, is the working winery where Christophe Diola makes the domaine wines. The explosive 2020 is simply sensational, one of the best young Grancey releases I've tasted. Both **powerful** and **refined**, the wine is **succulent, long, and fresh**. The tannins characteristic of red Corton are there, but hardly noticeable because of its suave texture. Impeccable balance suggests this Grancey will develop beautifully. Either drink in now or in a decade or two.

# Maison Louis Latour Whites 2020s

December 21, 2022



**96 pts**

## Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru 2020

Latour, the largest owner of Corton-Charlemagne, sets the benchmark for that Grand Cru year in and year out. Explosive and forward, Latour's ravishing 2020 is less tightly wound compared to many of their young Corton-Charlemagne, which means you can drink it now with enormous pleasure. My preference would be to cellar it for a decade or two to appreciate the phenomenal complexity their Corton-Charlemagne develops. With all its ripeness, it is not heavy or over-the-top. Great spice and acidity in the finish give it energy and length. A hint of balancing bitterness suggests that this will turn out very well.



**95 pts**

## Meursault Premier Cru Les Genevrières 2020

Anyone who denigrates négociant bottlings needs to try this extraordinary wine. A gorgeously transparent wine, its spiciness speaks of Genevrières, which vies with Perrières as the village's top site, while its richness speaks of Meursault. Its refinement, length, and energy speak of the Latour style.



**92 pts**

## Pernand-Vergelesses Premier Cru En Caradeux 2020

The very top portion of the En Caradeux vineyard carries the village, not 1er Cru appellation. But just below the demarcation, that is the upper part of the 1er Cru portion, marl-filled soil makes it a good site for Chardonnay. The whole vineyard sits across the valley from the hill of Corton and some say that the white En Caradeux is like a mini-Corton Charlemagne. Latour's plush and ripe 2020 finishes with a welcome tinge of bitterness and good vibrancy.