

Louis Fabrice Latour, The Man, The Négociant, The Wine lover



Louis Fabrice Latour runs his family business from their 17th century house in the heart of Beaune in Burgundy. [Maison Louis Latour](#) is one of the most important négociant-éleveurs of quality wine in Burgundy. It started life out as a cooperage before moving into wine and acquiring vineyards across Burgundy, and today they hold the largest area of Grand Cru property in the Cote d'Or. On an unseasonably warm Thursday in early February, Louis Fabrice – 7th generation of négociants – flew into Dublin to take the wine trade on a journey: “Twelve wines that tell the story of Innovation at Maison Louis Latour over the last century”. This is one of many tastings [Febvre](#) have hosted throughout the month of February. Thankfully, The Taste was lucky enough to get a chance to sit down with the unassuming and charismatic Louis Fabrice in the plush surrounding of the Westbury Hotel. We talked about life, wine and Beaujolais.

“ *This historic Maison is one that best understands the world today and its recent development show a great strategic intelligence – Michel Bettane* ”

It has been 219 years, did you ever feel pressure to go into the family business especially one that has been there since 1797?

No, maybe when I was younger, but not any more. I actually studied political science at university in Paris. Then I joined a bank, but my father never put me under any pressure to join [the family business], he wanted me to want to be involved as you have to love this business. I was 35 when I joined the team, I was always fascinated by our wines. I like the diversity of the job, you buy, you sell, you vinify, you meet people, I like the fact that it is a living thing. It was in 1999 when I officially took over.

Have your children expressed an interest into following you into the business?

Not yet, they are too young, but I hope so. I will be like my father, I will never force them to join, it has to come from them.

What would you be doing if your family wasn't involved in the wine industry?

I would probably be a press journalist, either about wine or politics. I like diversity and writing can give you that. I like writing, in French (he says with a wry smile).

You mentioned at the tasting that global warming has been good for you?

Yes, especially in some of the villages where there have been problems with ripeness. [In] Pernand Vergelesses even the pinot noir has another degree of ripeness. I don't like over powerful wines.

“ *I think Burgundy has never been so well balanced than today*

What are you hoping to express with your wines?

We are not obsessed with being big, we want to continue to bring more balance, low alcohol as well as bringing out more pinot noir. I don't really want to go outside Burgundy, I have no intentions at the moment to go abroad. We have a lot of potential in Burgundy.

“ *At Maison Louis Latour, we imprint each wine with an individual style that our customers can rediscover year after year, a well balanced wine with good acidity.*

You still have a bottle of 1865 Corton, will you ever drink it?

Probably not. It is one of the few pre-phyloxera wines we have. I have tried the 1878, 1898, all grand crus and they are still drinking well. We don't have a lot of old wines. I probably have only 30 from before World War 1. I am not so fascinated myself by old wines.

What wines do fascinate you, what do you like to drink yourself?

I am more fascinated by wines I've done myself. I joined back in 1988 and one of the best vintages has been 1990; I have seen it grow, seen how it has matured. I love the 1959, but it was already thirty years old when I tried it, so it was not exactly young. I like to see the evolution of wines I've worked with. I drink a lot of village wine, but you know what, I really like Cru Beaujolais, I will buy land in Beaujolais.

“ *Beaujolais has a great future*

How do you find Ireland?

I love Ireland, I worked here for six months with our previous importer Gilbeys, I know Rosslare quite well as it was where my father sent me to learn English. Our wines have been in Ireland for over 125 years. Sadly I only get to Ireland twice a year. Plus Ireland has better restaurants than London right now, I am amazed by people's interest in fine wine and food, although the country is a bit too price sensitive about wine. I think the French understand this more.

What are the positives and negatives about being a négociant? Do you see any negativity for being one?

Well small is always beautiful but there is not so much negativity shown to us. As for being a négociant we do get to say no to a bad vintage, we will still buy some grapes but that is more for goodwill than for the grapes, this gives us a lot of freedom. The negative would be some customers don't want to see our wine everywhere, they want smaller domaines and I respect that. Though we only employ two hundred people, we are a mid sized company.

What is your opinion on the new trend for wine on tap?

Like water? ok, no. Not for me. We will only ever have our wine under cork.

Your father has written a very detailed book about wine, would you consider doing something similar yourself?

One day when I retire I want to open a wine museum, all the documents we have throughout the generations. To be able to show you the first invoice showing our first shipment to Ireland. To display two hundred years of documents and the itinerary of the Maison. I will look to the past.

What do you want your customers to know, to take away about Maison Louis Latour?

The finesse, the elegance they know to expect good wine. I wouldn't like our customers to be lost, they will know what to expect. For the wines to respect the food.

So what would your favourite meal be?

Blanquette de veau, (French veal ragout) I like real dishes.

What do you get up to in your spare time?

I take care of my kids, the eldest is fifteen and the youngest is five. I like to play sport, tennis, swimming, badminton, with family and travel you need to keep fit. I also enjoy chess and catch up with friends

“ *To Ireland – Thank you for your love and passion for Bourgogne – Louis Fabrice Latour.*