

## France, Burgundy: Pierre Duroché - A Gevrey Star Ascending

April 30, 2015 – The Wine Advocate

How the hell have I missed Duroché? *Mea culpa*. I've driven past their gates in the middle of Gevrey village countless times and clocked the signage, but had neither the time nor the wherewithal to check out what lies beyond. That's my loss. Wrist duly slapped. Because when I did finally pull up my socks and arrange a tasting with winemaker Pierre Duroché, I was poured the kind of red Burgundy wines that put a big fat grin on my face: poised and *terroir*-driven, but delivering fruit and complexity. These were wines both articulate and eloquent. I had to disguise my elation as I tasted through virtually their complete range of 2012s and 2013s, the latter having been bottled the previous month.



"I am the fifth generation of winemaker," Pierre said, as I sat down to taste in the winery. He comes across as a relaxed, passionate young winemaker, perhaps a little self-effacing, perhaps just coming to terms with the praise that his wines are beginning to garner. Apart from his penchant for classic rock and reggae (Toots & the Maytals - an excellent choice, sir), Pierre's passion outside fermented grape juice is rock climbing. In fact, he is proficient at a very high level and spent two years with the French team. Just take a look at this picture - it makes this vertigo-suffering writer dizzy just looking at it!

However, winemaking is central to his family. His wife has worked at Domaine Tortochot and is presently working at Jacques Cacheux in Vosne-Romanée. He has two sisters, one married to a winemaker in the Jura (Domaine de la Borde) and the other working in a hospital and married to the son of Jean-Michel Guillot.

"I always was interested in making wine since I was very young," Pierre continued. "So I spent a lot of time in the vineyard. But I had a normal schooling. I got a '*scientifique baccalauréat*' in 2000 when I was 18, and afterwards I completed a BTS in oenology and viticulture in Beaune. I spent six months in Châteauneuf du Pape at Château La Gardine from September 2002 to February 2003. It was a memorable harvest. And I visited other *domaines* in Australia, California and Spain. But for me it was very important to learn more the *terroir* in Burgundy than winemaking in other place."

I asked Pierre if he remembered his first wine.

"I can't remember my first wine. I was too young, but it was a wine of my father of course!" He did mention, however, one or two particular wines that have inspired him, such as Claude Dugat's Griotte - Chambertin 1999 and Armand Rousseau's Chambertin Clos-de-Bèze.

The history of the domaine actually stretches back further than I expected.

"The first bottling was in 1933 by my great-grandfather. My grandmother's family owned Domaine Thomas and these were joined with his grandfather's holdings. We presently farm 8.5-hectares in Gevrey alone. My father Gilles started in 1973 and he retired in December. I started in 2005, working in the vineyard and doing the vinification. I have changed a lot of things but it was not a revolution, just more attention in detail. This is very important. I'm very glad that my parents and grand parents have kept the old vineyards! We don't use herbicides and use nothing against botrytis apart from some copper sulphate, though occasionally we use treatments when the weather is bad. We have a large number of very old vines, so the yields are low and we don't do any green harvest."



I have listed the *domaine* holdings below alongside the date of planting:

Chambertin Clos de Bèze: 0.2530 hectare -1920  
Latricières-Chambertin: 0.2757 hectare -1965  
Griotte-Chambertin: 0.0192 hectare -1964  
Charmes-Chambertin: 0.4121 hectare -1959, 1971, 1981, 1990 and 1998  
Gevrey-Chambertin Lavaut St Jacques: 1.2025 hectare -1923 to 1971  
Gevrey-Chambertin Estournelles St Jacques: 0.1277 hectare -1981  
Gevrey-Chambertin Champeaux: 0.1340 hectare -1986  
Gevrey-Chambertin Aux Etelois: 0.3473hectare -1971  
Gevrey-Chambertin Champ: 0.7077hectare -1969 and 1973  
Gevrey-Chambertin Les Jeunes Rois: 0.3340hectare -1953  
Gevrey-Chambertin Le Clos: 0.3917hectare -1998  
Gevrey-Chambertin Villages: 2.8724hectare -1951 to 1980  
Bourgogne Rouge: 0.4977hectare -1969 and 1985  
Bourgogne Blanc: 0.4019hectare -2003 and 2005

You'll notice that morsel of Griotte-Chambertin and perhaps also my lording of the 2012. This must constitute one of the most elusive wines in Burgundy. In 2012 there was just

80-liters eked from 172 vines that are ostensibly a continuation of their parcel in les Etelois. It is so minute that Pierre told me that after their debut 2007 the authorities prohibited its production because it was so negligible. Fortunately in 2011 Pierre asked customs if it was possible to bottle after a change in the law and it was allowed.



"The Griotte was blend into Gevrey-Chambertin village before," he said. "When I took over from my father I decided to try

to vinify this very small part separately. It was conclusive. So in 2011 we started to sell some of the bottles and it was a great success! The vinification is the same as the other vats but it just needs a lot of attention. I use some whole bunch: 100% in 2012 though in 2013 it was destemmed and in 2014 I used around 75% whole bunch. I'll probably continue to vinify this cuvée with a large percentage of whole bunch since the 2012 was a good success. I have ordered an 86-liter barrel for the 2013 vintage to age the wines?it was just due to the quantity of the harvest. I have a small stainless-steel vat for the fermentation."

I then asked Pierre about the *modus operandi* in the winery.

"Because we do so much work in the vineyard, usually we do not need to do a lot of sorting. With respect to the winemaking, after complete destemming we put the grapes in the vat and ferment with natural yeast: no enzymes, just a bit of sulphur. We do *remontage* and *pigeage* depending on the vintage, each appellation with the same approach. We used 10% to 20% new wood for the *premier crus* and 30% to 75% for the *grand cru*, mainly from the Cadus cooperage plus some Cavin and Billon."

Pierre's 2012 delivered between 13.5% and 14% natural alcohol degrees. The wines were deeply impressive and I would have eloped with any of them (if I could.) Each wine

brimmed over with intensity, precision and poise, Pinot Noir that will drink early but also with the propensity to age. Don't overlook entry-level cuvées such as the Gevrey-Chambertin les Jeunes Rois 2012 that punches well above its reputation. I admit that I thought this would be a hard act to follow, but the follow-up *village cru* "les Etelois" was just as enthralling and it just got better from there. In fact, they were so good that to be frank, there is not a huge gap between those and the Charmes-Chambertin and Latricières-Chambertin. Though the 2012 showed a little more consistently than the 2013s, I appreciate the style of the wines here that do bear semblances to Armand Rousseau.

What I like about Duroché is that they capture the essence of *terroir*. There's a sense of edginess, a transparency about these wines that express both place and season. Along with Domaine Heresztyn virtually next door, Gevrey is now nurturing a new generation of winemakers who are turning round *domaines* that were the "also-rans" of the appellation and turning them into front-runners, thereby widening the choice for consumers. I cannot wait to taste Pierre's 2014s hopefully later this year, but if after the tasting, he invites me for a quick but of rock climbing - I'll politely decline. —Neal Martin