



Domaine Lafarge, Burgundy 2009 Vintage, En Primeur

It was 8:00 am and Domaine Lafarge had the 'post-coffee tasting slot' – the first appointment of the day. We were greeted enthusiastically by Michel Lafarge who insisted that he would far rather see us early than late, when our palates would be jaded after hours of tastings. It is quite a thought though and it feels rather unnatural to start one's day spitting out the product of the family's life's work. Michel Lafarge is currently at the helm, with his son Frédéric tending the vineyards. This is very much a family business: the estate was founded in the early 19th century and each generation has sought and succeeded in enhancing the estate both in terms of size and stature.

Entrance to the cellar is via a juddering electronic platform, descending into the darkness below. The cellar itself is steeped in character and gives a real sense of history; ancient walls, ceiling and bottles all but obscured by a thick sci-fi fungus. This mould, known as the angels' share, is caused by evaporation and is entirely natural, though not exactly aesthetically pleasing.

We have often noted that on seeing this cellar, it would be easy to make the erroneous assumption that this domaine is a very old-fashioned, traditional affair – a misconception which is given added weight on witnessing the particularly classical labels. To an extent, Michel and Frédéric do adhere to time-honoured practices – but with a surprisingly youthful outlook. They are always questioning hitherto accepted practices and are constantly seeking improvements.

It is true that the wines of Domaine Lafarge are very classical, but the family's approach is fresh, enterprising and innovative, as highlighted by the fact that they elected to convert to biodynamic viticulture as far back as 1996 – a decision which would have had huge ramifications in terms of additional work. The prime motivation for this initiative was, initially, the sustainability of the land but it soon became clear that this system, so tuned in to natural rhythms, resulted in wines of even greater intensity and purity – something of an unexpected bonus.

Alison Buchanan (Associate Director, Buying)
February 2011

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

- 14-16** A very good to excellent wine.
- 16-18** An excellent to outstanding wine.
- 18-20** An outstanding to legendary wine.

- Wines are judged within their peer group.
- A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14 - 16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A 'plus' adds further to that potential.
- A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.

2009 Tasting Notes

Red Wines

Bourgogne Passetoutgrain L'Exception

Corney & Barrow Score 16+ to 17+

This is a stunning, shimmering bramble-ruby in colour, immediately inviting. The nose presents both exuberant summer berry fruit perfumed with violets, and more haunting old vine intensity. The vines here were planted in 1929 by Michel's father and natural low production makes for a complexity which far out-classes this modest appellation. This is a 50:50 blend of Gamay and Pinot Noir, adding to the intrigue. The palate is rich and full with spiced cherries to the fore, a lovely balance of ripe fruit and acidity, all underscored by fine-grained tannins. This is a serious glass of wine which warrants a little patience.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2017+

£120/case of 12, in bond UK

Bourgogne Pinot Noir

Corney & Barrow Score 17 to 17+

This is a very pretty lustrous, limpid ruby in colour, slightly paler than the passe-tous-grains, a 100% Pinot Noir from Volnay itself. The nose offers a profusion of violets, roses, pink peppercorns and red berries, fresh and exhilarating. The palate is a little more sedate, richly textured and supple. This is a charming wine, very pure and very expressive with clear-cut Pinot character – a lovely insight into Volnay style, beautifully handled.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2017+

£145/case of 12, in bond UK

Volnay

Corney & Barrow Score 17+

A glossy, limpid ruby, this stakes its claim from the outset. The nose is simply gorgeous, fresh, appetizing and wonderfully aromatic, floral notes complementing bright, focused fruit. The palate, in turn, mirrors the perfumed character of the nose, summer pudding freshness and a silken texture, supported by noble tannins – a lovely wine.

Recommended drinking from 2013 to 2018+

£295/case of 12, in bond UK

Volnay Vendanges Sélectionnées

Corney & Barrow Score 17 to 18

This Volnay comes from specially-selected parcels. A beautiful rich cherry-ruby, it proffers an impressive depth of fresh, sweet fruit, set off with a heady dash of pepper. There is a sense of self-control on both the nose and palate as violet and rose aromatics and vibrant fruit seem to be champing at the bit, restrained and complemented by well-integrated tannins and a vivid minerality. Layered, complex and seductively textured, this is a fine ambassador for the appellation.

Recommended drinking from 2013 to 2019+

£345/case of 12, in bond UK

Beaune 1er Cru Les Aigrots Rouge

Corney & Barrow Score 17 to 18

Brilliant jet-ruby in colour, this has a nose which really makes one smile, perfumed and generous with a focused minerality giving direction to vivid fruit. The Pinot Noir vines here are planted lower on the slope than Chardonnay, on very gravelly soils which contribute the precise mineral complement to expansive red and black berries. This is something of an insider's wine, offering great value for money.

Recommended drinking from 2013 to 2020+

£425/case of 12, in bond UK

Beaune-Grèves 1er Cru

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 18+

This is a beautiful, bright shimmering ruby, the product of the oldest Lafarge vines, at 90 years. The nose has precision and depth, offering primary notes of violets and red fruits, slight caramel tones within an earthy backdrop - complex and intriguing. The palate offers similar aromatics and complexity dark fruit refreshed by floral notes and a fine mineral focus - very attractive and very, very long.

Recommended drinking from 2013 to 2020+

£475/case of 12, in bond UK

White Wines

Bourgogne Aligoté Raisins Dorés

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ to 18

This is an exceptional wine produced from a tiny parcel of old vines (around 75 years old) between Meursault and Volnay. Aligoté Doré is a very special varietal, markedly more characterful than its more prominent cousin Aligoté Vert. It is something of an insider's wine and well worth seeking out. The grapes are harvested late – the 2009 being picked at the end of September. A rich gold in colour, this presents a very attractive blend of orchard and stone fruit, honeyed, slightly spiced and energised by citrus zest. The palate reveals similar aromatics set within a rich, creamy texture and revealing additional floral notes, all underscored by minerals. Precise and focused, this is a lovely wine and a refreshing change.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2014

£120/case of 12, in bond UK

Meursault

Corney & Barrow Score 18

Shimmering gold in colour, this is immediately enticing, offering a captivating blend of honeyed orchard fruit, cream, spice and stony minerality. The palate, echoing the aromatics presented on the nose, is seductive in texture; rich, with hints of warm brioche, nuts and pain au raisin – yet this remains disciplined and adroit, refreshed by citrus zest and driven by ferrous mineral precision. This is a very considered translation of a vintage, avoiding weighty extravagance – perfectly pitched throughout and finishing long.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2018+

£275/case of 12, in bond UK

Meursault Vendanges Sélectionées

Corney & Barrow Score 17 to 18+

This is from a parcel which abuts Santenots, planted on rocky soil. Glittering pale gold, it presents a nose which combines nuts, minerals, orchard and stone fruit, all perfumed with white flowers. This is a very individual style, rather straight-laced and very pure on both the nose and palate yet there is an underlying richness, reflecting the vintage. Focused and precise, this will please the purists – a noble Meursault, highly bred and wonderfully long – very fine.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2019 plus

£315/case of 12, in bond UK

Beaune 1er Cru Les Aigrots Blanc

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ to 18

The vines here are 40 years old on average from a parcel lying towards Pommard, at the same height as Clos des Mouches and planted on soils which favour Chardonnay. Lower down the slope Pinot Noir thrives on gravel. Brilliant pale gold in colour, this charms from the outset with a nose redolent of tarte tatin with a blend of warm pastry, caramel, vanilla and orchard fruit all lifted by a vibrant swirl of citrus. The palate takes up the gauntlet, balancing innate richness with a refreshing acidity and a refined mineral precision – an insider's wine.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2017+

£395/case of 12, in bond UK

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