



## DOMAINE PIERRE VINCENT: HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

After a successful stint at Domaine Leflaive, during which he was instrumental in restoring its reputation at the top of the Burgundy pecking order, Pierre Vincent is now pursuing his ambition to make wine under his own name. Raymond Blake meets a man who has found his *métier*



Christmas Eve 2024, 8:25am. After three murky days when the cloud sat heavy on the Côte d'Or, obscuring vineyard and village alike, a dazzling sun brightened the slope, making it easy to find Domaine Pierre Vincent on the outskirts of Auxey-Duresses. Leaving Meursault behind, it is a sharp left off the D973 just before the village, down a rutted track that is subject to waterlogging no matter the season. It's an unimposing approach—all the attraction here is in the vines. But first, some context.

Rolling the clock back 20 years, I first met Pierre Vincent on October 12, 2004, early in his career, when he was working at Maison Jaffelin in Beaune, part of the Boisset group. As a schoolboy, he had harbored no winemaking ambitions, though he had an interest in agriculture, given that his father

bred Charolais cattle in the Saône-et-Loire département. "I was fascinated by nature—the technique and the analytical side of what my father did—though I did not want to join him in his profession." After school, he studied viticulture and enology in Dijon, and following brief spells at Antonin Guyon Marchand in Beaune and Jaffelin, he succeeded Pascal Marchand at Domaine de la Vougeraie in 2006. At the time, yet to establish a solid name for itself, Vougeraie had mentioned Vougeraie wines only to be asked if I meant Vougeot, even by Burgundians.

The domaine was founded by siblings Jean-Charles and Nathalie Boisset in 1999 and laid claim to a magnificent decade he was in charge, Vincent solidified both his name and the domaine's reputation. Without making radical changes, he steered the Vougeraie style toward greater finesse, with less immediate impact on the palate.

In some respects, Domaine Leflaive's white-wine equivalent of Domaine de la Vougeraie, the Côte de Nuits, and it would be exalted status at the turn of the century, the world for wines of peerless beauty. Under the guidance of Anne-Claude Leflaive, Vincent converted the domaine to biodynamic, took a severe battering in the early 2000s despite her biodynamic practices—wines' magnificence in youth—before showing little inclination to address the corruption by premature oxidation.

There was much to be done when the domaine's name was to be restored, and the most obvious change was the switch to many adjustments to winemaking, applied in the background. Together, Vincent steadied the ship, and it seems that Vincent would work out his Puligny; he had reached the top of the

**A white range bookended by** This was, of course, to reckon without red wine again. To this line of inquiry, a smile and a gesture. His opportunity to investors Hervé Kratochvil and Bernard they acquired Domaine des Terres de la Vougeraie. Thereafter, and until the end of 2020, life, spending mornings at his domaine and afternoons at Domaine de la Vougeraie. The 7ha (17-acre) domaine, though an impressive roster of vineyard holdings

Opposite: A happy Pierre Vincent at the door of Domaine des Terres de la Vougeraie, acquired with

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## THE WORLD OF FINE WINE

### feature veraison / Domaine Pierre Vincent

five white and two red, and spread across 20 appellations. Many of the cuvées amount to no more than a handful of barrels, a circumstance in which Vincent revels, mentioning that for him his eight barrels of Puligny-Montrachet in a regular vintage constitutes a large cuvée. The winery is located beside the River Volle—hence the waterlogged approach track—meaning that the cellar is unusually humid, reducing the need to top up the barrels.

Vincent's winemaking is relatively simple. After being picked into 26lb (12kg) boxes, the white grapes are sorted and go straight to the press without crushing, followed by a short settling in stainless-steel tank before transfer to barrel for fermentation. He is happy for plenty of solids to make it to barrel. "I like turbidity," he says. "I am a partisan for a high level of lees." *Bâtonnage* is employed between alcoholic and malolactic fermentation, and a year in barrel is followed by six months back in tank before bottling. Dogma plays little part in Vincent's approach, but he is adamant that the period in tank is essential for pure, clean flavors and harmony on the palate. Earlier harvesting than under the previous regimen will also play a part in keeping the house style fresh, rich, opulent, textures are to be avoided. "Meursault foie gras is not my style."

The white range is bookended by brilliance—from humble Aligoté, to patrician Corton-Charlemagne. The former comes

from two vineyards within Auxey-Duresses and displays a bracing citrus character, fresh and perky, with a saline, mineral snap on the finish. It is lean and precise, though not searing, with a dry bite that is almost tannic. *Elevage* is in a 60/40 combination of oak (10% new) and amphora, and the wine is an exemplar for a style of white Burgundy that is gaining greater recognition and approval. The days of curling the lip and reaching for the cassis at the mention of Aligoté are gone.

The Corton-Charlemagne is a stunning wine, a real rival to the Montrachets farther south that garner the lion's share of attention when the world's best-Chardonnay plaudits are being handed out. It is an understandable situation, for the broad sweep of vineyard that wraps around the Hill of Corton encompasses great variety, most especially aspect, which swings from due east in Ladoix-Serrigny to due west, and more, in Pernand-Vergelesses. Holdings are scattered, too, as with Pierre Vincent's two plots that total half-a-hectare (1.2 acres). One, planted in 1966, lies on the southwestern slope in Aloxe-Corton; the other, "around the corner" in Pernand-Vergelesses, where in summer it can be 11am before the morning sun touches the vines, planted in 1949. As a result, Vincent harvests the Aloxe plot five days ahead of the northwest-facing thin strip of vineyard in Pernand. Each is vinified separately and only assembled into the final blend after



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the year in oak, to "marry" during the six months in vat. The result is a wine of grace and harmony, elegance and poise—an aristocratic wine, fully deserving of its grand cru status. Its polished pearl of flavor challenges the vinous lexicon, defying attempts to corral it with mere words.

Between these poles of excellence comes a dozen other whites, some of which are made from vines now approaching their centenary, such as the Meursault Les Grands Charbons, planted in 1936, the Meursault Premier Cru Les Charmes, planted in 1936, and the Puligny-Montrachet Premier Cru Les Referts, a relative youngster from 1949. Speaking of this old-vine heritage, Vincent says, "They are my power but also my responsibility [...]. We need to understand the old vines [...]. Preserving them is the challenge of my life." He replants vines as needed, around 1–2% annually, and despite the challenge, he is under no illusion about the great fortune of having such venerable vineyards to work with. As to the vines, the Grands Charbons is smooth and succulent, the Charmes is weightier but carries it lightly, and the Referts is poised and elegant. There is great energy in all of them, but this is harmonious, finessed energy—there isn't a hair out of place.

Where elegance is the hallmark of Vincent's white wines, the reds carry a more vigorous flavor profile—a firmer handshake, as it were. He is a lover of whole-bunch fermentation, usually in the range of 30–70%. "I always use some whole bunches, though I only decide at the sorting table [...]. They bring flavors of spice and dried flowers, as well as greater freshness on the palate [...]. I like to play with whole bunches. I vat is filled alternately with whole bunches and destemmed grapes, after which the temperature is held at 54–57°F (12–14°C) for a few days of maceration before it is allowed to rise naturally for fermentation to begin, though he never lets it exceed 82°F (28°C). He relies principally on *remontage* for extraction, with *élevage* is in standard 228-liter *pieces* from Chassin, Tonnellerie de Mercurey, and Berthomieu, with a modest proportion of new barrels, perhaps 15%.

The resulting wines display an abundance of ripe fruit, intense rather than concentrated, with a lovely waft of sweet Duresses. Les Closaux—made with 40% whole bunches from 1955 vines—is shot through with gentle spice, while the Volnay

Opposite: Vincent among his barrels, only 10% new, which he fills with "plenty of solids," stirred between alcoholic and malolactic fermentations.

Ez Blanchés (50% whole-bunch, 1959) takes this character a step further with greater complexity and depth of flavor. Ez Blanchés lies above Clos des Chênes, rising to 1,150ft (350m) at the tree line and bordering Monthlie. Hence it is separated by little more than half a mile (1km) as the cross lies from Monthlie premier cru Les Duresses vineyard, yet it is a clear difference in style. From his 0.7ha (0.4-acre) he Vincent produces about four barrels of a notably perky with a mild tannic grip. Finally, the Volnay, Premier Le Boncret, downslope neighbor of Champans, marks a sterner beat, courtesy of dense fruit, firm structure and impressive depth.

### Experience, expertise, and maturity

It is too early to cast definitive judgment on Domaine Vincent, but it is not casting a hostage to fortune to say Vincent and his partners have hit the ground running, if to three significant factors. First, the good standing of Domaine Vincent before they bought it. Though it is a young domaine, having been founded in 2009, it quickly established a sound reputation, as Jasper Morris MW comments in his book *Inside Burgundy*: "These are smart wines in both color and offering a good range of bottles at affordable prices." Judging by samples of the 2023 vintage from harvest in July again in December 2024, smart is about to get smarter. In they did not buy a pig in a poke. Second, the impressive vines. As mentioned, for several of the wines above it, unusual for them to be made from vines that have reached half-century, with the near-centenarians bringing the average up to nearly 60. Such a wealth of maturity can be of as a vinous trust fund, a deep reservoir of potential waiting to be tapped by a dexterous hand. Third, that hand comes in the shape of Pierre Vincent, whose 20 years' experience acknowledged talent as a winemaker make him the perfect custodian for such riches.

Though he evinces no world-conquering ambition, takes only a few minutes in Vincent's company to note the resolve beneath the smiling, youthful features. He is a man, for example, that he wants to remain solely as a domain, not follow the "hybrid" model that he says became popular after their all-too-modest harvest by buying grapes. This practice has continued since, so that today grapes. This practice has continued since, so that today grapes. This practice has continued since, so that today grapes. This practice has continued since, so that today grapes.

In addition—and this is more sensed than explicitly stated—one feels that Vincent has found his comfort zone. One feels that Vincent has found his comfort zone. One feels that Vincent has found his comfort zone. One feels that Vincent has found his comfort zone.

And does he hope that someday in the future a *Côte de Nuits* vineyard might be added to his exclusively *Côte de Beaune* portfolio? "Yes, absolutely!" ■

**Notes**  
1. At the time of writing, it was too early to taste the 2024 vintage. Vincent has already gone down in infamy as one of the most difficult to find. That said, it was quantity more than quality that was badly hit. Vincent's production was about half that of 2023, but he is quick to point out that despite the significant reduction, he is in a far more fortunate position than his colleagues in the Côte de Nuits, who suffered much greater losses. "It is low, but it is not a disaster," and the wines have fabulous density of fruit and flavor."

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# Flashnews

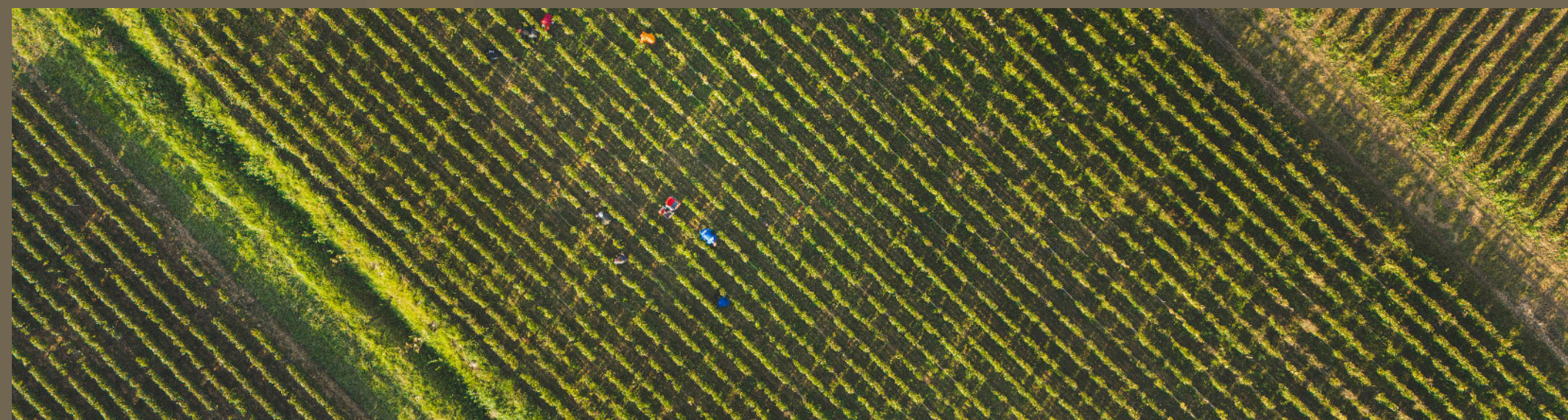


“A white range bookended by brilliance. This was, of course, to reckon without his desire to make wine in his own name. His opportunity came about thanks to investors Hervé Kratiroff and Eric Versini, and together they acquired Domaine des Terres de Velle in July 2023. Thereafter, and until the end of 2024, Vincent lived a double life, spending mornings at his newly minted eponymous domaine and afternoons at Domaine Leflaive.

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The Auxey-Duresses Les Closeaux—made with 40% whole bunches from 1955 vines—is shot through with gentle spice, while the Volnay Ez Blanches (50% whole-bunch, 1959) takes this character a step further with greater complexity and depth of flavor. Ez Blanches lies above Clos des Chênes, rising to 1,150ft (350m) at the tree line and bordering Monthelie. Hence it is separated by little more than half a mile (1km) as the crow flies from the Monthelie premier cru Les Duresses vineyard, yet there is a clear difference in style. From his 0.17ha (0.4-acre) holding, Vincent produces about four barrels of notably perky wine with a mild tannic grip. Finally, the Volnay Premier Cru Le Ronceret, downslope neighbor of Champans, marches to a sterner beat, courtesy of dense fruit, firm structure, and impressive depth.

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