



■ PETRUSADVISERS

Horizontal Montrachet 2013

**Wine Tasting with Jasper Morris MW
on 8th April 2024 at 6.30pm**

hosted by Klaus Umek

Pavillon, Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane,
Hamilton Pl, London W1J 7DR



LE MONTRACHET

Le Montrachet is a single eight-hectare vineyard which straddles the border of the two communes that append its name to their own, Puligny and Chassagne. High among the most celebrated white-wine vineyards of not only France but the globe, Montrachet sits embedded in a clutch of grands crus that, as with the communes, add its name to theirs.

Of the many glowing references to the wines of Montrachet over the centuries, I particularly love the phrasing of one of the earliest. Here is Abbé Arnoux, writing in his *Situation de Bourgogne* in 1728: 'Ce vin a des qualités dont la langue latine et la langue française ne peuvent exprimer la douceur....je ne puis exprimer la délicatesse et l'excellence'. ('This wine has qualities of which neither the Latin nor the French language can explain the sweetness....I am not able to express the delicacy and excellence'.)

Why is Le Montrachet so exciting? Partly it is the exact site of the vineyard, on a saddle which is fully exposed both to the south and the east. Then there is the sub-soil: James Wilson talks of 'the marvelous geologic heritage of Le Montrachet – thin, marly limestones interbedded with marls on an extremely gentle slope. There is without a doubt some Chevalier slope wash of the Nuits strata in the bloodstream of Le Montrachet, but it is all royal plasma.'

Exactly when Le Montrachet was first planted we do not know; there is a mention of 'vignes et terres en Mont Rachaz' in 1252, being the gift of Pierre and Arnolet de Puligny to the Abbey of Mazières. A rent book of 1483 gives the first evidence of vines on the Chassagne side of Le Montrachet, and they were indeed white grapes – 'la vigne blanche du seigneur.'

By 1831 Dr Morelot was talking of 'sa légèreté, son parfum, sa finesse, son extreme delicatessen, beaucoup d'esprit sans sécheresse, une saveur liqoreuse sans fadeur, en font un des meilleurs vins qu'on puisse boire'.



Thomas Jefferson, American president and noted wine-lover, adds a practical measure of how highly it was regarded: Montrachet, he pointed out, was selling for 1,200 livres the queue (two barrels) or 48 sous the bottle, compared to Goutte d'Or (Meursault) at 150 livres. And Dr Lavalley, in the mid-19th century, went one further; he reckoned

that no price was too high to pay for the wine: 'Aussi le vin de Montrachet doit-il être considéré comme une de ces rares merveilles dont il n'est permis qu'à un bien petit nombre d'élus d'apprécier la perfection... Que celui qui pourra en acheter quelques bouteilles des meilleures années se considère comme satisfait, quel que soit le prix; il ne l'aura jamais payé trop cher'. ('Also the wine of Montrachet should be considered as one of those rare marvels of which only a small number of the chosen are permitted to appreciate the perfection...and that he who is able to purchase some bottles of the best vintages should be satisfied that, whatever the price, he will never have paid too much'.)

Then came the advent of appellation contrôlée: it became necessary to agree what could or could not be called Montrachet. In 1921 court action was taken successfully against certain vigneronns who had been using the name Montrachet for vineyards outside 'le vrai' Montrachet. However, a small area of Chassagne-Montrachet's Dents de Chien vineyard was incorporated into the final delimitation.



THE MONTRACHET PRODUCERS

Owner	Hectares	Plots
Marquis de Laguiche	2.0625	64
Domaine Thénard	1.8231	32, 34
Bouchard Père & Fils	0.8894	67
Boillerault de Chauvigny	0.7998	118-121
Domaine de la Romanée Conti	0.6759	31, 129, 130
Jacques Prieur	0.5863	30, 33
Domaine des Comtes Lafon	0.3182	37
Domaine Ramonet	0.2590	66
Marc Colin	0.1068	27, 28, 161, 182
Guy Amiot	0.0910	25, 29
Domaine Leflaive	0.0821	134
Blain-Gagnard	0.0783	132
Fontaine-Gagnard	0.0781	133
Lamy-Pillot (Mlle Petitjean)	0.0542	24
Domaine d'Eugenie	0.0428	172
René Fleurot	0.0408	173

MONTRACHET IN 2013

It was a miserable start to the 2013 season. Though the depths of winter were relatively mild, it refused to give up its grip easily. March recorded the lowest ever sunshine hours for Burgundy, which retarded early growth – something which on balance pleased the vigneronns who feared possible frost damage if the season got off to a precocious start. There were flashes of warmth in April but by and large the weather remained cool and often damp.

May however was a disaster, beginning with heavy flooding on 3rd/4th May. The month remained exceptionally miserable, preventing vigneronns from getting their tractors into the vineyards to plough or spray. By the middle of the month

there was a serious risk of oidium, but when the temperature dropped again this receded for the time being. Even so, to wake up to snow on the morning of 25th May was something of a surprise.

The vigneronns were becoming demoralised – after three short crops, surely not another one! There had been a good ‘sortie’ – plenty of embryo bunches – but these were beginning to abort in the cold wet weather even before the flowering. June was somewhat better than May and eventually the flowering got under way in the Côte de Beaune and Mâconnais from around June 22nd, forty days later than 2007 or 2011, suggesting a harvest beginning around the end of September, or indeed into October.

Storms were regularly forecast during late July and early August, but none developed into hail over the Burgundian vineyards. By the second week of August a pattern of mostly sunny days without excessive temperatures – typically mid 20s – had settled in to the relief of the producers. This clear sunny weather enabled the vines to develop healthily, and there was enough water in the ground to prevent fears of drought. Apart from a heavy rainstorm on Saturday 24th August, fine, even hot, weather returned at the end of the month and into early September.



The next break came with heavy rain on Saturday 7th September followed by a cool week alternating between crisp clear periods and dank drizzly days, continuing for a further week of cool damp dispiriting weather. Small patches of rot began to appear, especially in the white wine vineyards. Harvest seemed a long way away. However, all was not lost and the sun returned around the 19th September.

2013 was a tricky vintage to manage as the harvest loomed. The white grapes in particular were fragile and it was a question of holding off picking to complete ripening, while hoping to avoid the onset of rot. The ideal choice was Thursday 3rd October 2013 when almost every Montrachet producer was at work picking their plot or plots.



WINE LIST

- 1 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Henri Boillot
- 2 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Vincent Girardin
- 3 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Louis Jadot
- 4 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey

- 5 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Lamy-Pillot
- 6 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Guy Amiot
- 7 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Marc Colin
- 8 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Blain-Gagnard
- 9 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

- 10 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Leflaive
- 11 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine des Comtes Lafon
- 12 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Ramonet
- 13 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti

- 14 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Jacques Prieur
- 15 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Baron Thenard
- 16 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Bouchard Père & Fils
- 17 Montrachet Grand Cru 2013, Domaine Marquis de Laguiche
(Joseph Drouhin)



Flight 1

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Henri Boillot

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Vincent Girardin

Tasting Notes



Flight 1

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Louis Jadot

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey

Tasting Notes



Flight 2

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Lamy-Pillot

0.0542 ha

Lamy-Pillot (Mlle Petitjean)

Domaine Lamy-Pillot has farmed this tiny holding (plot 24) for Claudine Petitjean since 1989. There is scarcely enough to make a full barrel each year.

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Guy Amiot

0.0910ha

Guy Amiot's grandfather, Arsène Amiot, purchased and planted up plots 29 and 25 in the Dents de Chien sector just after World War I. They have not been replanted since.

Tasting Notes



Flight 2

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Marc Colin

0.1068 ha

This small holding, enough for around two barrels or 50 cases of wine per year, has been put together from four plots (27, 28, 161, 182) in the Dents de Chien sector, the south- west of the vineyard. Its wine is never an explosion of fireworks, but more a question of concentration, persistence and finesse.

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Blain-Gagnard

0.0783 ha

Plot 132 was taken over from Jacques Delagrangue on his retirement after the 1999 harvest. Before that Jean-Marc Blain had worked his grandfather's plot (133), which went to Richard Fontaine-Gagnard in 1996 on the death of Edmond Delagrangue-Bachelet.

Tasting Notes



Flight 2

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

0.0781 ha

Plot 133 was purchased in 1978 from the Fleurot family, was farmed first by Edmond-Delagrangue-Bachelet and then by Jean-Marc Blain-Gagnard, until it reverted to Richard Fontaine-Gagnard when the patriarch Edmond Delagrangue died in 1996.

Tasting Notes



Flight 3

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Leflaive

0.0821 ha

It was a wonderful moment for Domaine Leflaive when they were able to buy plot 134 from Domaine Fleurot in 1991. Pierre Morey, who was no longer sharecropping the Lafon Montrachet, was engaged by Domaine Leflaive to continue his acquaintance with the greatest white vineyard of all. This wine showed particularly well in a horizontal tasting of 15 different 1999s undertaken in 2003. Domaine Leflaive also undertook the winemaking of the 2016 multi-producer blend made from those few bunches which survived the frost.

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine des Comtes Lafon

Comte Jules Lafon bought plot 37, just under a third of a hectare in the south-east corner of the vineyard, in 1919 – though the first wine to be bottled at the domaine was not produced until 1935. Dominique Lafon took over the farming from Pierre Morey, who had been sharecropper for the family, in 1991. Having introduced biodynamic farming principles, he was able to revitalise the somewhat degenerate old vines in his holding of Le Montrachet. His Montrachet today is matured in new oak for the first year, then in older wood for the following winter and spring, before bottling after 18 to 21 months' total élevage. René Lafon would often keep the wines for much longer in barrel, however.

Tasting Notes



Flight 3

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Ramonet

0.2590 ha

The Ramonets have a small holding of a quarter of a hectare on the Puligny-Montrachet side of the vineyard (plot 66) bought in 1978, with vines planted before 1938. These were grubbed up during the 1980s and replanted in 1990 (first vintage 1992). Stories are told of the legendary Pierre Ramonet arriving before the scandalised notaire with wheelbarrows of old banknotes when he bought his holding from the Milan and Mathey families. The 1979, 1982 and 1983 all showed marvellously at a Montrachet marathon tasting in Nashville in 2005.

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine de la Romanée-Conti

0.6759 ha

Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is the fifth-biggest owner of Le Montrachet, with two separate plots on the Chassagne-Montrachet side. In 1963 34.19 ares were bought from the Comte de Moucheron (plot 31, the vines running from west to east). Plots 129 and 130 (each 16.7 ares, with the vines running north to south) were purchased in 1965 and 1980.

The domaine has typically made a point of late picking, which it feels is necessary for the full expression of Montrachet character, though this may be changing with the arrival of a new winemaker in 2018. Intriguingly, in tastings, this late-harvest effect shows very prominently when the bottle is opened; but with longer exposure to air the vineyard comes to the fore.

Tasting Notes



Flight 4

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Jacques Prieur**0.5863 ha**

The domaine bought three small plots, then unplanted, in the lieu-dit Dents de Chien, officially consecrated as Montrachet in the judgement of 1921. These make up what is now plot 30, totalling 20.90 ares. This sits above plot 33 (37.73 ares), which is the southernmost of the plots with rows running down-slope from west to east.

Tasting Notes

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Baron Thénard**1.8231 ha**

The Domaine du Baron Thénard owns two substantial plots: no. 32, of 74.61 ares, runs west-east while no. 34, running north-south as the slope falls away towards Chassagne-Montrachet, comprises 1ha 8.70 ares. Paul, second baron Thénard, purchased the vineyard in 1873; fortunately the holding has not been subdivided since, thanks to the perspicacity of his widow, who set up a family company the year before she died in 1921. The business is currently run by Jean-Baptiste Bordeaux Montrieux, a member of the family. After a long alliance with Remoissenet, which distributed the Baron Thénard Montrachet, some of the wine is sold under the domaine label, and some to various merchants – notably Jadot. Such merchants send in the barrels of their choice and the wine is then distributed after the malolactic fermentation.

Tasting Notes



Flight 4

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Bouchard Père & Fils

0.8894 ha

Bernard and Adolphe Bouchard bought 1.94 hectares from the Mandelot family in 1838. Part of the inheritance has been handed down across the years to what is now Domaine Boillereault de Chauvigny, but the sizeable plot 67 belongs to Bouchard Père & Fils, from which it makes a distinguished Montrachet. The split of the original holding came about apparently because one brother built a wall at the bottom, along with its gateway and the other brother declined to pay his share of the costs. Possibly not a great long-term decision...

In September 2020 I had the fascinating opportunity to taste some old samples of Montrachet from the Bouchard cellars – they were served blind so as to avoid misconceptions about the vintages which included some of the supposedly worst years since the Second World war: such as 1958 and 1963 – both not only still alive but thoroughly interesting to taste.

Tasting Notes



Flight 4

Montrachet Grand Cru 2013

Domaine Marquis de Laguiche (Joseph Drouhin)

2.0625 ha

The first two hectares on the Puligny side of the vineyard (plot 64) belong to the Marquis de Laguiche, who is responsible for the viticulture, though in collusion with Maison Joseph Drouhin which organises the picking and then makes and markets the wine, an arrangement which began in 1947. Currently the planting of the vineyard dates from 1961, 1969 and 1984, with some further replanting in the last few years.

Charles-Amable de Laguiche owned a sizeable slice before the Revolution, but this was confiscated and he ended up on the scaffold – though the family appear to be in possession again in the early 19th century. When Charles-Amable's widow died in 1810, the Laguiches owned over four hectares still (or again). The slightly larger half remained with the Laguiche family, while just under two hectares went to another branch of the family, the Mandelots. This was sold to members of the Bouchard family in 1838 and today is divided between Bouchard Père & Fils and Domaine Boillereault de Chauvigny.

Tasting Notes



NOTES



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