



DOMAINE LEFLAIVE

Stephen Tanzer's



International Wine Cellar

the consumer's passport to fine wine

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September/October 2009
Issue 146

Domaine Leflaive

Cellarmaster Eric Remy describes 2008 as a classic vintage for Domaine Leflaive. Humid, showery weather had threatened widespread outbreaks of mildew and oidium, and Leflaive did a total of 13 treatments against vine maladies. After the rains of early September, the estate did a labor-intensive pass through the vines, eliminating 10% to 15% of the fruit. But then the north wind that began in the middle of the month saved the crop, concentrating sugars and acids. At the harvest, which started here on September 22, grape sugars were typically 12.8% to 13% or more (very little chaptalization was done), and acidity levels were around six grams, a high percentage of which was malic. The 2007s here, which had only recently been bottled at the time of my visit, emphatically showcase their various terroirs and would appear to be constituted for good medium-term aging. (Remy recommends waiting on the 2007s and drinking the 2006s earlier.) Incidentally, Domaine Leflaive is widely cited by long-time collectors as an estate that has largely avoided problems with premature oxidation. When I discussed this subject with Remy, the only recent vintage he had any doubts about was 2002. But he was not yet sure whether the variability he has noticed up to now is a function of corks or of the wines themselves. Clearly, the Leflaive whites gain in stability from an extended stay in cuves. For example, the 2007s remained in tanks from early September of 2008 until they were bottled in April and May of this year. I have omitted notes on a couple of 2008s that were in the middle of their malos (most of the premier crus were finished), but I have included early impressions of the very promising grand crus, which had not yet started their secondary fermentations. (Wilson-Daniels, St. Helena, CA)

2008 Domaine Leflaive Meursault Sous le Dos d'Âne

(malo finished; sulfited two weeks before my visit) Bright, pale yellow. Complex, leesy aromas of stone and citrus fruits, spices, toast and vanilla. Lush, even fat, on entry, then firm toward the back, with strong citrusy acidity leavening the wine's richness and giving it shape. The pH is currently a very low 3.1, according to cellarmaster Remy, and this wine will need time to harmonize. 88-91

2008 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet Clavoillon

Bright yellow. The nose suggests riper fruits than the Dos d'Âne: yellow peach, even orange. Then silky and ripe for this cuvee at this stage, conveying an impression of richness and lowish acidity. This is 14% alcohol-and more harmonious today than the Meursault. 89-92

2008 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières

Bright yellow. Musky aromas of yellow peach and flowers. Very ripe and opulent, with a smoky quality that Remy says is as much from the soil as the oak barrels, 20% of which are new. Almost tannic on the back end, but lush more than particularly structured wine, with good stuffing and verve. 89-92

2008 Domaine Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet Les Combettes

Lovely lift and verve to the ripe pear and floral aromas. Deep, ripe and quite rich, with strong but well-integrated acidity nicely buffered by the wine's solid extract. Offers hints of lemon and orange as it opens in the glass. A rather powerful wine, and yet shows a reserved, even elegant, quality. Finishes classically dry, without the tannic impression of the Folatières. (The Pucelles, which was barely halfway through its malo and not squeaky-clean at this stage, already showed compelling perfume and class and would appear to have even greater potential than the Combettes.) 90-93

2008 Domaine Leflaive Bienvenues Bâtard-Montrachet

(this and the subsequent 2008 grand crus had not yet started their secondary fermentations) Ripe aromas of pineapple, apple, menthol and flowers. Nicely delineated and firmly built, with a distinctly saline minerality giving this wine a seriously dry impression. Not a fat style, but should offer lovely balance and cut. 91-93

2008 Domaine Leflaive Bâtard-Montrachet

Pale yellow. Complex aromas of ripe stone fruits and musky flowers, with a hint of more exotic fruits. Considerably bigger and richer than the Bienvenue; in fact, this is quite opulent for the year, offering a wonderfully fine-grained texture. A ripe pineapple quality is leavened by firm acidity. Already explosive on the back end. 92-95

2008 Domaine Leflaive Chevalier-Montrachet

Bright, pale yellow. Pure, delicate aromas of crushed stone, hazelnut and white flowers. Then penetrating and dry, with imploded, mineral-driven flavors currently dominating subtle stone fruit notes. Best today on the very long and linear finish, which features captivating mineral perfume. The yield here was a moderate 35 hectoliters per hectare, compared to 37 for the Bâtard and 33 for the Montrachet. 92-95

2008 Domaine Leflaive Montrachet

(tasted from a single 350-liter barrel) Cool nose hints at iodine and mint. The brilliantly delineated palate offers superb fruity cut and power supported by strong minerality and complicated by a toasty nuance. Almost painfully intense today; not a thick wine but finishes with outstanding building persistence and lovely ripe acidity. This fruit came in with five grams per liter of malic acidity, but there's nothing hard about it. 93-96

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