

Catherine et Claude Maréchal

Profile

In Côte d'Or parlance, Claude Maréchal is a flatlander. That means that he is from the plain, rich in grains and produce, that extends from the river Saône to the ridge of hills (the actual Côte d'Or that gave its name to its department) where the prestigious Burgundy vineyards are planted. Claude Maréchal is a gifted and thoughtful winemaker in his early forties who, having befriended Henri Jayer (a fellow "flatlander" who many years ago settled in Vosne-Romanée), tries to follow in his mentor's footsteps, through informal consultation with him.

Maréchal's father was a cereal farmer with a few vineyard holdings in Bligny-les-Beaune, a sleepy village east of the city of Beaune, in the plain, where Maréchal still resides and makes his wines. Claude developed a passion for vineyard work and winemaking early on, and pieced together a sizeable estate by renting vineyards all over the Côte de Beaune.

His principles in the vineyards are straightforward: the vineyards are plowed, no herbicides are used, treatments are kept to a minimum and the pruning is severe to keep yields low. Vinification is done in open wooden vats, all grapes are totally destemmed, and fermentation is not induced by adding yeast, so it can take a few days to start (the "natural" cold pre-maceration common in Vosne-Romanée). New wood barrels are added every year, but their proportion stays low, because Maréchal doesn't look to make over-oaked wines: he'd rather have each vineyard express its own individual character, and make wines where fruit dominates.

Maréchal's aims to make "vins de plaisir", wines that offer a pleasurable experience for everyone, and in several Parisian wine bars, where the staples are Rhône, Loire and Beaujolais crus wines, his Burgundies fit right in.

The Bourgogne Cuvée Gravel is a prime example of this type of wine. This wine is packed with up-front raspberry fruit and finishes long with ripe Pinot Noir aromas. Other wines made are Auxey-Duresses white and red, Pommard la Chânière, Savigny-les-Beaune VV and les Lavières, and Côtes-de-Beaune Villages (from Ladoix).