

**2017 Burgundy: A Modern Classic**  
**featuring Domaine Jean Fournier**  
**by Neal Martin**

**Domaine Jean Fournier**

So, here I am at the tasting room and winery in Marsannay, the penultimate day of my four-week marathon, waiting to taste Laurent Fournier's wines... except Laurent is not here, but in some distant vineyard with a client. All my appointments have been going like clockwork up until this point. The secretary apologizes, convinced our rendezvous was scheduled two days later. I recheck my itinerary spreadsheet and to my horror, see that I had mistaken *Fourrier* for *Fournier*. I had arrived at the right time, at the wrong *domaine*, in the wrong appellation. Damn you, failing eyesight! I hurry down to Gevrey-Chambertin to find a bemused but forgiving Jean-Marie Fourrier and return to see Fournier the following day.

Now, the reason I was aghast at missing my visit is that Laurent Fournier is a dab hand at making great wines from modest terroirs at consumer-friendly prices. This is not an address to come to if you seek flashy Grand Crus or a blue-chip name. You come to Fournier if a) you seek wonderful Village Crus from around Marsannay b) you want to find out what a cuvée consisting entirely of *millerandé* bunches tastes like or c) you have misread Fourrier for Fournier.

Laurent himself is a young, very animated and passionate winemaker and I always find that reflected in his wines, which tend not to be shy and retiring, yet sidestep ostentation. They brim with vitality and energy, adeptly reflecting their respective terroirs. "We started the picking on September 3 or 4," he told me. "This year for the first time we controlled the temperature of the bunches by using a container to store the fruit right after picking. We add no sulphur, just a little after the malolactic fermentation. We also use almost an equal amount of barrels (*pièces*) and larger 600-litre *demi-muids*. Generally I use around 50% whole bunch fruit. I chaptalised just some cuvées around half a degree."

Laurent Fournier's 2017s are expanded this year courtesy of some new *fermage* agreements such as Aloxe-Corton and Gevrey-Chambertin, not to mention a couple of cuvées such as his Marsannay Es Chezots that are due to come from a

different source of vines than before. His 2017s convey wonderful, almost life-affirming fruit intensity, crisp tannins and brightness, like the set of Christmas lights suspended above the tasting table. Though he does not have a wide range of Premier or Grand Crus, there is immense variety within his portfolio that keeps you on your toes, whether it is his Pinot Blanc/Pinot Beurot blend or his Bourgogne Origine or his special selection of old vines on hard limestone soils that he bottles as Pur Pôt or those exclusively from *millerandé* bunches, P'tite Grumotte. As you might read from my notes, many of his wines come from old vine stock, up to 90 years old. This partly underpins their success. I believe Laurent Fournier himself pushes his cuvées to greater heights and, in my experience, ensures consistency year to year. I will finish with a small anecdote. I once opened his Bourgogne Le Chapitre for Christmas dinner to howls of protest from various family members expecting a grander label. Those protests immediately ceased once they actually tasted the wine.

### **2017 Marsannay "Pur Pôt"**

Made from a selection of very old vines in Clos du Roy where there is very hard limestone soil, the 2017 Marsannay Pur Pôt has a beautiful bouquet of floral black cherries, boysenberry jam and cassis aromas that explode from the glass. The palate is well balanced, the 75% whole bunches only noticeable toward the grainy, slightly tertiary finish. A touch of spice crops up on the aftertaste. Very fine, but give it a couple of years. Three barrels produced. **(90-92 points)**

### **2017 Marsannay "P'tite Grumotte"**

The 2017 Marsannay P'tite Grumotte is a special selection of *millerandé* grapes that were frosted last year. You would mistake the nose for a Gamay if you had this blind - just like a Moulin-à-Vent. The palate is well balanced with supple blueberry and red cherry fruit, smooth texture and an intense, confit-like black olive finish. Very fine. **(89-91 points)**

### **2017 Marsannay "Trois Terres" Vieilles Vignes**

The 2017 Marsannay Trois Terres Vieilles Vignes comes from a different source than in previous years, this time courtesy of the oldest vines in Les Longeroies, Es Chezots and Clos du Roy and comprising two-thirds whole bunches. It has a generous, quite sensual bouquet of violet-infused, precocious red and blueberry fruit. The palate is medium-bodied with fine-grained tannin, plenty of sappy black fruit here and a dash of white pepper that enlivens the finish. Excellent. **(90-92 points)**

### **2017 Côte de Nuits Village Croix Violette**

The 2017 Côtes de Nuits Village Croix Violette comes from vines planted in the 1930s in Brochon, near the convent. It has an impactful, beautifully defined bouquet of ebullient red berry fruit laced with orange zest. The palate is medium-bodied with supple ripe tannin, crisp acidity and a mineral-driven, tensile finish that is very persistent. *Superbon!* **(88-90 points)**

### **2017 Marsannay Es Chezots**

The 2017 Marsannay Es Chezots will be the final vintage from Fournier's original vines. Next year it will come from a parcel at the top of the vineyard. It has the most extrovert

bouquet from Fournier, featuring blueberry, hints of cassis and potent floral scents. The palate is medium-bodied with crisp, taut tannin, and there is impressive depth here. The finish is quite linear and sinewy yet retains control throughout. Plenty of potential, but it needs time. **(90-92 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Les Longeroies**

The 2017 Marsannay Les Longeroies has a broody, tightly wound bouquet, although you can tell there is plenty of coiled-up black fruit and blueberry here, plus a hint of pressed iris flower in the background. The palate is medium-bodied, the oak showing a little at the moment, although that will be integrated by the time this quite sinewy, powerful Marsannay is bottled. Superb. **(91-92 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Clos du Roy**

The 2017 Marsannay Clos du Roy has a detailed, mineral-driven bouquet, the 25% new oak neatly integrated and allowing the terroir to sing. The palate is medium-bodied with veins of blue fruit, and the oak is discreet here partly thanks to Fournier's judicious decision to finish the aging in larger used barrels. There is fine delineation on the finish. Excellent. **(90-92 points)**

#### **2017 Fixin Les Petits Crais**

The 2017 Fixin Les Petits Crais shrugs off a small reduction to offer generous red cherry and raspberry preserve aromas. The palate is medium-bodied with good backbone and fine grip and slightly saline in style, with a precise finish. Very fine. **(89-91 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Cuvée Saint Urbain**

The 2017 Marsannay Cuvée Saint Urbain offers crisp raspberry and *cassison* the nose, and just a tiny reduction that will soon dissipate. The palate is medium-bodied with supple tannin, fine grip and slight chewiness toward the finish. Give it a year in bottle to smooth the edges. **(87-89 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Les Longeroies Blanc**

The 2017 Marsannay Les Longeroies Blanc has a lifted bouquet of white-chocolate-tinged citrus fruit, the high-density planting (13-20,000 vines per hectare) fueling the concentration. The palate is well balanced with crisp acidity, fine tension and a mineral-driven finish. Classy, though not long-term. **(88-90 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Clos du Roy Blanc**

The 2017 Marsannay Clos du Roy Blanc offers attractive vanilla and almond scents on the nose. The palate is bright and tensile on the entry and very well balanced. Subtle tropical tones emerge toward the poised yet generous finish, and there is a hint of albumen on the aftertaste. Fine. **(89-91 points)**

#### **2017 Marsannay Cuvée Saint Urbain**

The 2017 Marsannay Cuvée Saint Urbain, a blend of younger vines with a little Pinot Blanc, has a delightful apple blossom and light yellow flower bouquet. The palate is well balanced with fine acidity, harmonious texture and a touch of orange zest and mango toward the brisk finish. Fine. **(87 points)**

### **2017 Bourgogne Origine**

The 2017 Bourgogne Côte d'Or Origine is two-thirds Pinot Blanc and one-third Pinot Beurot. It has a brush of wild honey and almond on the nose. The clean, fresh palate is well balanced with a fine line of acidity and a slightly grassy finish. Fine. **(88 points)**

### **2017 Bourgogne Aligoté Champ Forey**

There is only one cuvée of Aligoté this year from Laurent Fournier, since he was unhappy with the other cuvée that he usually makes. The 2017 Bourgogne Aligoté Champ Forey has a resinous bouquet, while the palate is well balanced with fine acidity and clean as a whistle on the bright finish. **(88 points)**