

Domaine Florent Garaudet - Monthelie



The young Florent Garaudet contemplates his painfully small 2012 vintage, total production pictured. There are four different whites and four separate reds. Some of his cuvées, like his Meursault yield little more than 25 or so cases. In fact his .09 hectares of old vine Aligoté renders far less.

Florent Garaudet's ambition in life is to be one of the greatest wine makers of his generation, in the manner of Dagueneau and Coche-Dury-- a cult figure whose wines rest far above the good but less than inspiring wines the world is awash in. Impatient and determined, Florent was unwilling to work with his father any longer and too devoted to his cause to wait for the inheritance. So he convinced his grandmothers on both sides to give him a few parcels. Lovingly, they obliged and he received less than two hectares. Thus the domaine was born and his first vintage was 2008. Florent was 23.

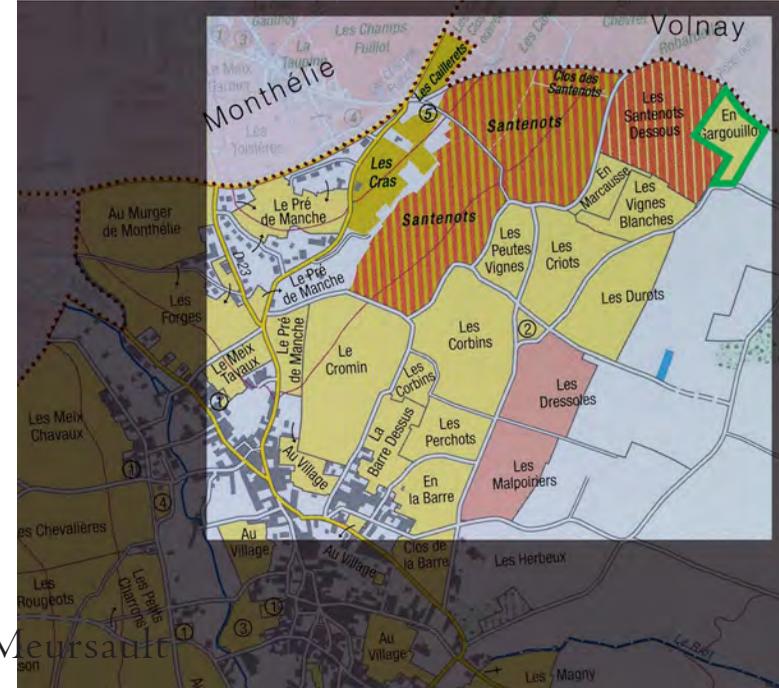
As a boy, Florent worked with his father, Paul Garaudet, in his native Monthelie. At his father's side he acquired his sense of place amid with in the cellar and his father's vineyards, which encompass six 1er Crus from Monthelie to Volnay. It granted him an intimate perspective on the terroirs he would soon be working himself. But Florent developed a still wider understanding of wine growing while staging in both Pic Saint Loup and Bordeaux. In the Languedoc he worked at Château la Roque, an impressive 80 hectare estate practicing organic. One can only imagine the move from 80 hectares back down to 2! Nonetheless, it was here that Florent picked up his unusual technique of using 400 litre oak barrels in addition the endemic 228L, favored throughout Burgundy. In Bordeaux he work as *maître de chai* at Château L'Enclos in Pomerol, where he briefly encountered sensibilities and aesthetics antithetical to his own. After these experiences, Florent returned home and by 2013 the Domaine had grown to nearly 3 hectares, which afford Florent four whites and five reds, three of which are 1er Cru. The vines are old and the wines are impressive. The production in tiny, and, so far, his aim is true.

The four white wines produced are Aligoté, Bourgogne Blanc, Meursault, and Puligny-Montrachet. No pesticides or herbicides are used. The fruit is destemmed and tank pressed, with skin contact lasting about 1.5 hours. The wines are barrel fermented with wild yeast. All of the white wines are raised on the fine lees in Allier oak, chosen for its delicate impact. The age of oak varies as does the size of the vessel. Batonnage is practiced once a week or according to his judgment. The wines are unfinned and unfiltered.



Florent bottles about 25 cases of 50 year old Chardonnay from Meursault's lieu-dit En Gargouillot, just below Les Santenots Dessous at the base of the Volnay hill. Florent farms .28 hectares.

The Aligoté comes a .09 ha plot of forty-year old vines far west in Puligny-Montrachet. Production is nearly non-existent-15-20 cases annually. The Bourgogne Blanc vines are from the lieu-dit Les Lameroses a bit younger at about 36 years. No new wood is used for either. He favors 4-5 year old wood for these two cuvées so as not to interfere with the fruit's character.

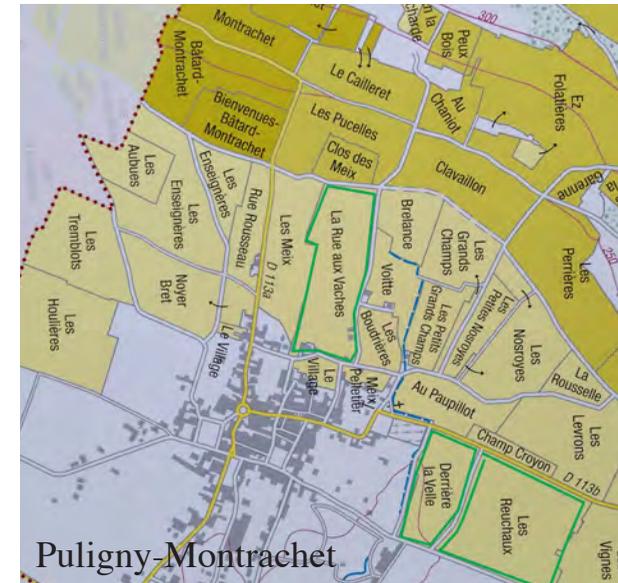


The Meursault is sourced from .28 ha in the En Gargouillot vineyard, located on the Volnay boarder (above in green). The vineyard takes its name from an ancient spring just south of the site. The name is a phonetic descriptor or onomatopoeia like the "babbling brook", or a spring which would emanate sound: "garg, garg, garg". Its derivation is Vulgate Latin for turbulent water--"Gurga". The vines are old, 50 years, and the soil is rich with clay. The fruit here ripens fully and produces a typically correct Meursault from small concentrated berries: the wine is fat and dense with broadness and uncton and a mineral finish. Because the wines large stature Florent raises his Merusault in 50% new wood. This is where Florent is at once a classicist and an innovator.



Florent owns .09 ha of forty-year old vine Aligoté. In person, there is something almost disturbing about these forms. These old timers yield about 4 clusters per vine. Young vines will produce 8-10. No green harvest here!

Garaudet strives for high acidity, but when the Meursault fruit leaves the vineyard the juice is quite rich, allowing the wine to support new oak seasoning. But new wood can have an excessively heavy and cloying effect on the palate, dulling the freshness and obliterating finesse. That is a serious problem for one seeking brightness and vigour. Florent solves this issue in a novel way. When he deploys new oak, he uses 400-litre barrels, not the standard 228L. This is a critical break with tradition. Yes the oak is new, but, because of the vessels size and the change in surface exposure, its impact is mediated. There is greater distance between the juice and the wood, so to speak, and this effectively dials back the oak's impression. It has a sweeter and gentler effect with seamless integration. Florent also prefers a light to medium toast for his barrels, which reduces the potential for heavyhandedness.



Florent's Puligny-Montrachet comes from 4 lieu-dits: Les Boudrières, Rue aux Vaches, Les Reuchaux and Derrière la Velle, which contributes the most to the assemblage. In the west his plots face one another, separated by the road that divides the two vineyards. Carillon is his neighbor in Derrière la Velle. In Rue aux Vaches his vines are in the east end and border the 1er Crus Clos des Meix and Les Pucelles.



Florent now farms .25 hectares of the 1er Cru La Taupine in Monthelie. In 2011, his first vintage for the wine, he rendered a barrel and a half. That's about 28 cases (foreground). In the back row one can see his innovative use of new 400-litre Allier new oak barrels--from the famed Tronçais forest. These are interspersed between the classic bourgundian 228L. Florent works closely with his barrel makers. Issues here include: quality of hand selected timber, 2-3 years seasoning in consistant environment prior to construction, hydrometrical control, precise temperature and duration of toasting. His cooper for his 228s is Frédéric Rousseau of the famed Tonnellerie Rousseau in Couchy. The 400L barrels are made by Francois Freres in Saint Romain.

Together the vine have a high average age of about 50 years as well. The critical difference here is the amount of new oak, which is less, about 30%. A remarkable Village wines with superb minerality driving the Chardonnay fruit.

Florent's three Monthelie 1er Cru vineyards are indicated in green on the map below. They are all red. Generally speaking the exposures are south to south-east. Les Riottes, however, is situated deepest in the Combe Danay and has an southern exposure and steeper incline. Toward the exterior of the Combe lay La Taupine and Les Champs Fulliot, both face due east on the south flank of the Volnay hill and might be imagined as extensions of Volnay's famous Clos de Chênes. Florent contends that the shallow and porous soils of Monthelie are ideal for Pinot Noir and the best is yet to come.



His Les Riottes vines are 60 years old and low yielding--40 hl/ha from a .25 hectare plot. The wine is deep, structured with a pronounce red fruits. The cuvée sees 50% new oak from Limozin. La Taupine, which may be our favorite is far more delectate and transparent than the Les Riottes. Seeing less oak, the wine is far more Volnay-like with impeccable balance with a limestone core. It is a 1er Cru that is almost never seen bottled separately and as such is very rare indeed.