

DOMAINE DUJAC

2017 Burgundy: A Modern Classic

Vinous – Neal Martin

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Maybe it is only in the last couple of years that I have truly appreciated Jacques Seysses's influence upon Burgundy. Not only has Dujac been one of the most prominent Morey-Saint-Denis producers since debuting in 1969, but Seysses's winemaking philosophy, and in particular the use of whole bunches, has had a profound effect upon the next generation of *vignerons*. Bottles from the 1970s and 1980s imbibed at Tour d'Argent last January attest to this, proof that Seysses unquestionably has the magic touch. Over the last decade, Dujac has been steered into the future by the next generation: sons Jeremy and Alec, and Jeremy's American-born wife Diana Snowden Seysses.

Alec Seysses greeted me at the winery in the heart of Morey-Saint-Denis and guided me down to a very busy barrel cellar. As he ascended the stepladder to extract his two whites, both maturing in concrete eggs, I asked him about the 2017 growing season. "Both 2016 and 2018 had their own difficulties, but 2017 was a more quiet season, an easy-going season, remarkable in the sense of just being nice. Spring and summer were good without being extraordinary. It was always going to be early vintage, although that is now becoming the norm." Seysses digressed into more global implications of a warmer climate. "That kind of worries me. We are picking a degree more alcohol than when my father started, which we know from our own records. That extra degree has helped here, whereas in other wine regions it has not. But we have more unpredictable weather - dry spells, hail, frost and so on. So far, we have navigated our way through, but how long can we keep doing that?"

He then returned to the vintage under the spotlight. "The whites were picked from August 25, with the Puligny-Montrachets followed by the Morey-Saint-Denis Village. The Monts Luisants needed an extra week due to the hail damage [as at Domaine Ponsot]. The whites were racked just before the 2018 harvest. The 2017 reds were picked from around September 3. We did fewer punch-downs because we preferred to just let the tannins come out, and alcohol levels are between 12.4° and 13.3°. The *négoce* wines will be racked into tank and bottled in December and the *domaine* wines will be bottled January to late March."

I asked his opinion of the quality of the 2017s, and as usual, Alec replied candidly. "I don't think they are as great as 2015 and 2016. But I don't want to put them down, as they are lovely to drink, in the same way that I feel we were too hard on our own 2007s." I understand his tepid view towards the 2017s, and some cuvées do not match with the very best that I have tasted over years of visiting this *domaine*. That is simply because they reflect the growing season, and truth is, there are plenty of gems across the range. Whether it is their Gevrey-Chambertin Les Combottes, Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru or Vosne-Romanée Aux Malconsorts, these rank alongside previous vintages, in my opinion. Perhaps the growing season just curtails the quality of their *négoçant* wines under Dujac Fils & Père, and yet they retain so much freshness and balance that they should offer great value, particularly the Morey-Saint-Denis Village.

One interesting nugget of information is the long-term plan for a new winery. "We will build a new winery for the next 50 years," Alec divulged. "It will be located against the current winery. We want to keep the charm of the place, with our parents living above the winery. The work is due to begin in 2020." It looks like the Dujac legacy is set to continue for many decades yet.

Vins Rouges

2017 Domaine Dujac Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru

The 2017 Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru is quite closed and broody on the nose, or at least it was on the day of my visit to the `_ domaine_`. Dark red fruit, cranberry and raspberry aromas reveal scents of crushed stone and damp autumn leaves. The nicely structured, medium-bodied palate features tea leaf and bay leaf on the entry. Midway through, it delivers the precision and openness you expect from this vineyard, then goes on to demonstrate superb clarity on the aftertaste. This is a lighter style of Bonnes-Mares and yet it will still need time in bottle.

2022-2040 (92-94)

2017 Domaine Dujac Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru Les Gruenchers

The 2017 Chambolle-Musigny Les Gruenchers 1er Cru has quite a savory bouquet, touches of dried blood infusing the red fruit. The palate is medium-bodied with grainy tannin. This is nicely balanced, though quite sturdy at the moment, with a backward, surly finish. Give it two or three years in bottle.

2021-2030 (90-92)

2017 Domaine Dujac Chambolle Musigny Village

The 2017 Chambolle-Musigny Village, which contains around 75% whole bunches, has a fresh, red cherry and strawberry bouquet, nicely delineated and focused. The palate is medium-bodied with gentle grip on the entry. Quite compact at the moment, but it will mellow during the remainder of its élevage. A touch of orange pith develops toward the finish. Fine.

2021-2029 (87-89)

2017 Domaine Dujac Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru

The 2017 Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru, around 85% whole clusters, has a tightly wound, damp earth bouquet that is well defined. The medium-bodied palate is masculine and structured, quite broody and surprisingly introspective. I don't quite detect the "charm" in this Charmes, but maybe it was just not showing on the day.

2021-2034 (89-91?)

2017 Domaine Dujac Clos Saint-Denis Grand Cru

The 2017 Clos Saint-Denis Grand Cru is more expressive aromatically than the Clos de la Roche at the moment. The terroir is slightly better articulated, notes of crushed stone perfectly infusing the red berry fruit. The palate is precise and focused, almost symmetrical in style, and very expressive. The long, gorgeous, almost tart finish belies the structure of this Grand Cru. Superb.

2022-2045 (94-96)

2017 Domaine Dujac Clos de la Roche Grand Cru

The 2017 Clos de la Roche Grand Cru has a precise, beguiling bouquet of raspberry and wild strawberry fruit, cold stone and sea spray scents, plus a touch of dried blood. The medium-bodied palate displays slightly chewy tannin on the entry and good depth. This is quite masculine in style, leading to a potent, saline finish, yet I would aver it does not quite have the depth or penetration of the previous two vintages. That said, it is still a finely crafted Clos de la Roche, though I find the Clos Saint-Denis romping ahead (at least in barrel).

2022-2040 (91-93)

2017 Domaine Dujac Echezeaux Grand Cru

The 2017 Echézeaux Grand Cru has a well defined bouquet of red and black fruit, the hints of black olive and light undergrowth turning into more tea leaf and bay leaf aromas. The palate is medium-bodied with slightly rustic tannin and a little oaky at the moment, but there is sufficient fruit to subsume the wood. I would just like a little more complexity to show through on the finish, like the Malconsorts.

2022-2040 (91-93)

2017 Domaine Dujac Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Cru Aux Combottes

The 2017 Gevrey-Chambertin Aux Combottes 1er Cru, which was slightly affected by hail, albeit affecting the canopy rather than the bunches, has an appealing, pure, quite airy bouquet of raspberry, bilberry and blackberry, just a touch of brine/seaweed emerging with time in the glass. The palate is nicely focused with sappy red fruit, well-judged acidity, and orange peel and hints of brown spice on the finish. While not as persistent as the 2016, this has good potential and seems to gain depth with aeration.

2023-2043 (92-94)

2017 Domaine Dujac Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru

The 2017 Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru comes from four separate vineyards: Ruchots, Les Millandes, Les Sorbets and Charrières (I can confirm that Alex Seysses can remember them all, so do ask him!) It has an attractive bouquet of blackberry and wild hedgerow, a distinct marine influence emerging with aeration. The palate is medium-bodied with sappy red berry fruit, a touch of cola and moderate depth, but maybe just lacking the complexity of the 2015 or 2016 toward the finish. Drink over the next 10 years.

2020-2030 (90-92)

2017 Domaine Dujac Morey-Saint-Denis

The 2017 Morey-Saint-Denis Village has a tad more precision on the nose compared to the Chambolle Village this year and feels very cohesive and harmonious. The palate is medium-bodied with supple tannin, a fine bead of acidity and a core of sorbet-fresh red fruit. Though this lacks the persistence of a great vintage, it has a spring in its step.

2020-2030 (87-89)

2017 Domaine Dujac Vosne-Romanée 1er Cru Aux Malconsorts

The 2017 Vosne-Romanée Aux Malconsorts 1er Cru has a little more intensity on the nose compared to the Les Beaux Monts at the moment, while the fruit is a tad darker. The palate is compact on the entry, linear and strict, with blackberry, raspberry and touches of brine on the sturdy finish. This demonstrates the spine I look for in a Malconsorts. Give it three or four years once in bottle, because it punches at Grand Cru weight.

2024-2040 (93-95)

2017 Domaine Dujac Vosne-Romanée 1er Cru Les Beaux Monts

The 2017 Vosne-Romanée Les Beaux Monts 1er Cru has a really lovely bouquet of red currant, wild strawberry and bergamot, the oak a little more marked, but that will be soaked up. The palate is medium-bodied with sappy red fruit, a keen thread of acidity, touches of orange pith infusing the second half, and a velvety finish. This is a delicious Les Beaux Monts in the making. Very suave. 2022-2040 (93-95)

Vins Blancs

2017 Domaine Dujac Morey-Saint-Denis Blanc

The 2017 Morey-Saint-Denis Blanc has a very strict, almost Chablis-like bouquet, nicely defined but tight-lipped at the moment. The palate is more expressive and very Aligoté-like in style, hints of ginger infusing the resinous, slightly nutty flavors. Just a touch smudged on the finish. Fine. 2020-2025 (85-87)

2017 Domaine Dujac Morey-Saint-Denis Blanc 1er Cru Mont Luisants

The 2017 Morey-Saint-Denis Monts Luisants Blanc was one of the few vineyards affected by hail this year, Dujac losing around 50% of the crop, though it mostly damaged the canopy rather than the bunches. This has an attractive honeysuckle and orange blossom bouquet, though perhaps it is not quite as penetrating as the 2016. The palate is fresh and vibrant with a fine bead of acidity, a significant step up from the Village Cru this year, and a light saline influence and hints of orange peel on the finish. Excellent. 2020-2030 (90-92)

2017 Domaine Dujac Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Folatières

The 2017 Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières 1er Cru has a very taut nose at first, only reluctantly unfurling to reveal green apple scents with touches of honeysuckle and linseed developing with time in the glass. The well-balanced palate is fresh on the entry with a fine bead of acidity, perhaps just needing to manifest more terroir expression and *mineralité* on the finish. 2021-2035 (89-91)

2017 Domaine Dujac Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Combettes

The 2017 Puligny-Montrachet Les Combettes 1er Cru is vibrant and energetic, offering much more *mineralité* and terroir expression on the nose compared to the Folatières. The small yield renders the aromatics more concentrated. The palate is very well balanced with a killer line of acidity, superb concentration, a tang of seaweed on the front of the tongue and a saline back palate. This is a Puligny that seems to have relished the benevolent growing season. Superb. 2021-2038 (92-94)