



Domaine Drouhin-Laroze

Caroline was back in the breach this year after excusing herself 12 months ago when she was in the later stages of pregnancy. Indeed, the stork seems to have been flying over the village a few times in recent months. Such life-changing events are contemporaneous with a changing of the guard at Drouhin-Laroze, as her father cedes more and more responsibility to Caroline and her brother Nicolas. « My father is open-minded », Caroline explained, when I asked her about the handover. « Occasionally he tells us better not to do something, but not often. This was not the case between my father and my grand father, Bernard. He passed away in September 2001 just before the harvest, so there was a very quick transition. Fortunately we have had a much longer period.

The previous evening, some Burgundy mavens and I had discussed Drouhin-Laroze and the consensus was that it has never quite fulfilled its full potential given its enviable roster of Premier and Grand Cru vineyards. I sympathize with that view. The wines have been consistent since I began tasting them in the late 1990s. Yet they have never kicked the ball out of the park, never laid down the gauntlet with a wine that surpasses your wildest expectations and reassess the domaine. They've been...steady. Perhaps the future will see a change in approach? Certainly investments are being made in the barrel cellar that Caroline showed me before the tasting – now looking much more chic. I asked whether Caroline and her brother Nicolas are introducing their own way of doing things.

« Nicolas is mainly in the vineyard and I'm looking after the vinification and the cellar, » she told me. « We are definitely having more involvement in the running of the domaine, especially in terms of the vinification. We are beginning to use more whole bunch fruit (see tasting notes for more exact percentages), less pigeage and remontage, doing a cold maceration for five days, trying to get a more elegant wine.

This is all good news as far as I can concerned, aware that my four penneth comes without a second's winemaking experience. Nevertheless, instinct tells me that their Musigny Grand Cru was calling out for say, 30-40% whole bunch fruit to bolster and add complexity. You get the feeling that this was a Musigny that is playing it safe, not daring to put a foot wrong, which is understandable given that they only have two barrels to play with. And I've been a bit parsimonious with my scores with respect to the 2014s that were picked over eight days from September 16. I think these wines can be better and I say this feeling guilty because both Caroline and Nicolas are such affable winemakers. Yet I am convinced that the direction they are pursuing is absolutely correct and their approach is surely going to benefit the wines. That might take time, but it will surely come.

Given their treasure trove of holdings, amassed because both their father and grandfather are single children, thus avoiding any primogeniture divisions, it would not surprise me if Drouhin-Laroze becomes one of the great growers in Gevrey-Chambertin. And as I remarked to Caroline, their excellent Latricières-Chambertin attests to what can be achieved here, with the bar set high. This was one of the best expressions of this Grand Cru that I tasted : intense and yet elegant, shimmering with tension with great precision and detail on the finish. It stood out among their Grand Crus, representing a beacon to aim for perhaps.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Bonnes-Mares - Grand Cru

Rating : 90-92

Drink : 2018-2032

Cost : \$138- \$139

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Chambolle - Musigny, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru includes around 35% whole bunch fruit and around 60% new oak. It has an open, quite transparent bouquet with mineral-tinged black fruit, a hint of Seville orange marmalade lurking in the background. The palate is medium-bodied with firm tannin that lends this Bonnes-Mares good backbone and a little more masculinity than previous vintages. I like the density here, but it just needs to « flow » a little more towards the strict, linear finish.

2014 - Laroze de Drouhin - Bourgogne Chardonnay Blanc

Rating : 87

Drink : 2015-2018

A Chardonnay Dry white Table wine from France, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Bourgogne Blanc is a little gem. Already in bottle, it offers attractive citrus lemon and white peach notes with a touch of beeswax. The palate is well balanced with a taut line of acidity, not a complex white Burgundy of sure, yet there is impressive weight and intensity here, with just a dab of spice on the finish to keep you coming back for another sip.

2014 - Laroze de Drouhin - Bourgogne Pinot Noir

Rating : 84-86

Drink : 2016-2020

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Bourgogne Rouge has an attractive bouquet with raspberry coulis and rose petals scents, simple but nicely defined. The palate is medium-bodied with crisp tannin, good body here for a Bourgogne Rouge with a taut, slightly compact, graphite-tinged finish. Drink over the next 3-4 years.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Chambertin-Clos de Bèze - Grand Cru

Rating : 91-93

Drink : 2018-2032

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Chambertin-Clos de Bèze Grand Cru includes 45% whole bunch fruit and was matured in 60% new oak. The nose is generous and perfumed with macerated black cherries, wild strawberry and light iodine notes, the new oak nicely integrated. The palate is medium-bodied with a crisp, orange zest-tinged entry. The tannins are quite firm and lend a rigid framework to this wine, this blend from a new oak barrel suggesting that 60% will be the right amount and allow the fruit to come through. Still, I would like a little more breeding here... more aristocracy...this is Clos de Beze after all!



2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Chambolle-Musigny

Rating : 85-87

Drink : 2017-2025

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Chambolle-Musigny, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Chambolle-Musigny Village has a simple blackcurrant pastille-scented nose. The palate is balanced by just missing the roundness and the sensuality one seeks in Chambolle. It feels a little static and needs to display more Chambolle typicity, a wine that needs to wake up!

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Chapelle-Chambertin - Grand Cru

Rating : 89-91

Drink : 2017-2029

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Chapelle-Chambertin Grand Cru has a noticeable dark colour. There is plenty of dark cherry and black plum fruit on the nose, quite fresh with violet scents developing with aeration, though not a complex bouquet. The palate is medium-bodied with quite fine tannin and well judged acidity. It is a linear Chapelle-Chambertin, a « correct » grand cru with a straightlaced finish that needs just a little more persistence.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Clos de Vougeot- Grand Cru

Rating : 91-93

Drink : 2019-2032

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Vougeot, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Clos de Vougeot Grand Cru, which is completely destemmed, has a sweet, almost pastille-like bouquet with maraschino cherry, blueberry and violet notes not unlike a Chambolle Amoureuses in some ways. I like the exuberance displayed here. The palate is medium-bodied with supple black fruit, the oak just a little dominating towards the finish although there is decent depth and persistence in place. Give it 4-5 years in bottle.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru - Au Closeau

Rating : 85-87

Drink : 2017-2025

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Au Closeau comes from 30- to 40-year-old vines. It has a simple red cherry and crushed strawberry-scented nose that is nicely composed and understated. The Palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin and a keen line of acidity, but it needs a little more substance on the finish that feels just a little « lightweight » compared to the superior Craipillot. Hopefully it will fill out by the time of bottling.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru - Clos Prieur

Rating : 86-88

Drink : 2017-2027

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru Clos Prieur has a little more complexity than the Au Closeau. Here the fruit is a touch darker with a subtle marine influence, a couple of oyster shells mixed in with the black fruit. The palate is quite sharp and citric on the entry. There is a surfeit of energy here and the very good tension. I wonder if that acidity is dialed up just a little too high on the finish? I appreciate the tension here but it just feels a little « uncontrolled » on the finish.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru - Craipillot

Rating : 89-91

Drink : 2017-2027

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru Craipillot has an elegant bouquet with lifted wild strawberry and raspberry fruit, touches of iodine developing with time. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin, vivacious red berry fruit interlaced with black pepper and a touch of orange rind. I like the energy here, the balance and the persistence on the finish. Very fine.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru - Lavaut Saint Jacques

Rating : 87-89

Drink : 2017-2029

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Gevrey-Chambertin 1^{er} Cru Lavaut Saint Jacques comes from a single parcel of around 72-year-old vines. It has a tightly wound, taciturn nose...cool like this vineyard, reserved at the moment but nicely defined. Aeration allows you to eke out subtle crushed strawberry and kirsch scents but they remain contained. The palate is medium-bodied with fine, supple tannin. It is nicely balanced. What is needed is a little more complexity towards the finish that is stubborn and linear, and more mineralité to shine through. Maybe that will develop during the remainder of its élevage.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Latricières-Chambertin - Grand Cru

Rating : 92-94

Drink : 2018-2032

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Gevrey-Chambertin, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Latricières-Chambertin Grand Cru has an attractive nose : more vibrant and nuanced than the Chapelle-Chambertin with more mineralité filtering through those lifted black and red fruit. The palate is crisp and tensile with fine tannin, juicy black fruit with just a touch of citrus lemon towards the finish. Yes, there is a bit of new oak to be assimilated (60%) but once it does, this will be a very fine Latricières that exudes class and a nascent sense of energy.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Morey-Saint-Denis

Rating : 84-86

Drink : 2017-2022

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Morey-Saint-Denis, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Morey-Saint-Denis Village had a slightly volatile nose... not too much... but just underlying the feisty red berry fruit. The palate is medium-bodied with slightly hard tannin and it needs more fruit to fill the centre of this Morey. Not bad, however I think the domaine have produced better in recent vintages.

2014 - Domaine Drouhin-Laroze - Musigny - Grand Cru

Rating : 91-93

Drink : 2019-2035

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from France, Chambolle Musigny, Cote de Nuits, Burgundy, France.

The 2014 Musigny Grand Cru consists of two barrels this year, both new oak. It has a broody bouquet at first that gently opens up with small black cherries, wilted violets and a touch of graphite. The palate is medium-bodied with supple tannin, not soft in the mouth but it feels round and fluid. I wonder if it just needs a little more tannic backbone on the finish here, perhaps a little more tension. I think some whole bunch might have added something to this Musigny. Let's see how it performs in bottle.