

# Domaine Serrigny Savigny-les-Beaune



Serrigny is a family operation deep in the hollow of Savigny-les-Beaune. The household is on the hill behind the local château, and when you pull out of their road you can look down and see the seigneur's crazy collection of mothballed fighter jets. He's got them lined up on the chateau's lawn, an eclectic display of man's bird of prey.

Domaine Serrigny dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It's made up of 7 hectares of vines (17 acres) and is run today by Marie Laure Serrigny. She's the fourth generation, and she took over the estate in 1995 with her younger sister Francine. They tended the vines, made the wine, and together did all the myriad of things involved in running a domain until late in 2016 when Francine succumbed to a long battle with cancer.

Gilles Mathieu, a member of Jean-Pierre's team over at Domaine Joseph Voillot, grew up in Savigny and had known the Serrignys all his life. He pretty much insisted that I visit, which I did early in February of 2016 without high expectations. The appellation is dominated by a handful of players and there was no press to speak of on the Serrigny wines.

Francine met me in her little courtyard on a wet afternoon. She wore boots, jeans, an old fleece over a sweater, and she had a tired air of *savoir faire*. There was no pretense about this grower. Marie Laure, dressed much the same, made an appearance to say hello and left for more pressing matters. The office Francine took me to had the look of a room that had been well used a generation ago. A fax machine still sat in the corner, plugged in. She opened a 2014 Bourgogne Blanc, and from the first scent of orchard fruits and minerals and honey I was carried away. Gilles arrived as the second wine got opened, his bald pate gleaming from the rain and his magnificent, sweptback moustache flaring like wings from his cheeks. As night fell, Francine's boyfriend Jean-Luc Rousseau came in from the vines. He worked for many years in the cellar at Vougeraie but came over full time to Serrigny as cellar master in 2015. A reputed soccer goalie in his youth, he's an enormous man with a great spread of arms, and he came into that dark room cold, wet, tired, and grateful for a glass. We sat around an old oak table in that modest office tasting what was an eye-opening range of old-vine wines from two vintages as the three friends caught up and warmly exchanged opinions on the wines. Among French growers, this was a common occurrence. For an American, it was a privilege. And not everything in Burgundy had been discovered, that was clear that evening, and that was pretty exciting. It was still possible to stumble upon two hardworking sisters who maintained a fax machine, did *pigeage* by foot, and made killer wines.

The domain farms small parcels in Auxey-Duresses, Côte de Nuits-Villages, Corton Charlemagne, Meursault, Monthelie, and Pernand Vergelesses, but the historic heart of the holdings is in Savigny. The farming culture is *lutte raisonnée*, i.e., sustainable, and the approach in the cellar is quite traditional. The parcel and the maturity dictate de-stemming entirely or partially or not at all (old man Serrigny never de-stemmed); ferments are spontaneous and the reds undergo alcoholic fermentation in wooden uprights; the cap is still, remarkably, broken up by foot; and all of the *élevages* take place in older barrels for fourteen months (sometimes less for the whites, sometimes more for the reds) before racking to steel where the wine rests for several more months. No fining for the reds and bottling with only a light filtration.

Another salient fact is that Marie Laure works with some very old vines. These vines give low yields, and it's an exceptional vintage here that gives as much as 40 hectoliters per hectare. She's not afraid to wait for good ripeness either. The result is a range of Pinots deliciously rich with earth, fruit and spice, and frequently, depending on how limey the limestone soil is in a given plot, quite mineral. They also have excellent acidities and tannic structures. The Chardonnays here are plump, toothsome renditions underpinned with driving acidity. These are wines made with a modest yet sure hand, which in all things wine is the most honest of hands. Average production is 2,500 cases.

The hail of 2013 damaged 80% of the Serrigny vines. The frost of May 2016 wiped out roughly 70% of the domain's crop. Any plans that Marie Laure might have had to buy an automated system of *pigeage* went out the window. Tradition, chez Serrigny endures.

<http://www.domaine-serrigny.fr/>