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The Evolution at Girardin

Catching up with what's new at Vincent Girardin in Burgundy's Côte de Beaune

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It had been a few years since I last visited [Vincent Girardin](#) in Burgundy's Côte de Beaune, so I was pleased to catch up with Girardin and his export manager Marco Caschera (formerly of Nicolas Potel). Girardin has been making some changes over the past few years. The overall goal is to work more naturally; the wines are showing more purity and focus as a result.

In 1998, he began moving to more organic cultivation. In 2008, the conversion to biodynamic viticulture started and since 2009 he has commenced the process for biodynamic certification. He plans to be fully converted by 2011.

This of course will apply to Girardin's 54 acres of domaine holdings. He also purchases fruit and a little juice from long-term agreements with growers to ensure consistency from vintage to vintage.

Each lot is fermented separately for all the climats and then blended based on a selection in the cellar. The grapes are crushed lightly before pressing and since the 2007 harvest, everything is fermented with indigenous yeast, without chaptalization or enzymes. Girardin feels this achieves a correct balance between sugar and acidity in the fermentations.

He has also cut back on the percentage of new oak since 2007, using roughly half as much as previously to better express the *terroir*. The village wines see about 10 percent, the *premiers crus* 20 percent and 30 percent for the *grands crus*.

The whites spend 12 to 18 months in barrel, depending on the appellation, followed by six months in tank. After the malolactic conversion, the wines in new oak are racked into older barrels. Girardin bottles according to the lunar phases.

All the whites were final blends drawn from tank.

Girardin rebuilt the walls in his 2.5-acre Chassagne-Montrachet Caillerets parcel. The **Clos du Caillerets**, from 40-year-old vines offered fresh lemon, floral and mineral aromas and flavors, with a hint of peach. It had harmony and finesse (88-91 points, non-blind). The **Chassagne-Montrachet La Romanée**, from purchased grapes, was racy,

intense and packed with mineral and citrus flavors that persisted on the long finish (89-92, non-blind).

From Meursault, the **Les Narvaux**, made from domaine fruit, was rich and honeyed, with green tea, lime and hazelnut notes (88-91, non-blind). Both the **Les Charmes-Dessus** and **Les Perrières** came from purchased grapes. The former revealed a rich, almost lush profile, yet with good cut supporting its ripe yellow notes of peach and golden apple (88-91, non-blind). The latter, from grapes 50 to 60 years old, smelled like chalk dust or pulverized stone, lime blossom, acacia and apple. Very taut and focused, it will need time (90-93, non-blind).

Girardin's **Puligny-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes** (another domaine wine) is a superb village-level white from grapes more than 50 years old. Lemon cake and hazelnut aromas introduce a firm, long, chalky wine, reminiscent of a blanc de blancs Champagne (89-92, non-blind). The **Les Pucelles** (domaine) was very lemony, with a touch of paraffin in the aroma followed by flavor of grapefruit and mineral. Fresh and full of drive, it has flesh and ends on a peach note (89-92, non-blind).

The biggest and most powerful of the Pulignys is **Les Combettes** (domaine). Dense, it might even be a bit brutish if it wasn't for the firm structure. Ripe apple and grapefruit and a touch of caramel flavors persist on the finish (90-93, non-blind).

As good as the chalky, mineral-infused **Corton-Charlemagne** is (90-93, non-blind), I gave a slight edge to Girardin's **Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet** (domaine). Though it is showing more oak at this stage, this broad, powerful white moves from toast and smoke notes to lemon, apple, butterscotch and green almond, lingering nicely on the finish (91-94, non-blind).

I tasted a few of Girardin's reds, which had also been racked and assembled in tank. My favorites were the sweet, mouthcoating **Pommard Les Grands Epenots Vieilles Vignes** (89-92, non-blind), from 55-year-old vines and the fleshy, cherry-filled **Charmes-Chambertin** (89-92, non-blind).