**Bourgogne’s New Generation**

By Kristy Wenz, WSET 3

It’s happened on more than one occasion, a collector, an educator, a Bourgogne enthusiast will say, what will we do when this generation of great makers and historians and traditionalists is no longer at the helm? Who can carry that torch? Well, just wait until you meet this next generation of winemakers. Not only will they carry the torch, but they might also have you falling in love all over again.

Bourgogne is a rich region and one with an unmatched terroir known for its excellence; and this next generation is no less enamored than the rest of the world. Luckily, they understand not only the history and tradition of Bourgogne, but they also bring to the table new expertise, technology and practices they believe will keep Bourgogne at the forefront of wine excellence.

What does this new generation have to offer this well-established and renowned wine region? Well, for starters, passion, but also an eye toward sustainability, climate change mitigation, collaboration, marketing, and increased quality controls. Like the generation before them, they grew up in Bourgogne. They know the community, the growers, the winemakers, and the vineyards. They also know the world at large, many having trained in other regions, attained advanced degrees taught by experts in the trade, or even started in other areas of business from which they gleaned advantageous skills and strategies.

What does this look like at the winery level? Let’s dive into four examples of wineries currently led by this new generation and how these young, passionate Bourgogne makers are willing to carry the torch of excellence, while adapting to new technologies, philosophies and values all in the name of a continued expression of the renowned terroir that is quintessentially Bourgogne.

**Caves de Lugny**

The vineyards of Cave de Lugny date back to the 18th century, and the co-op was officially the second in the Mâconnais region in 1927. While some co-ops have developed a less than stellar reputation over the years tarnishing the category, times change and each is unique. Regions move from quantity to quality, education spreads, technology advances, and so too do co-ops modernize. Cooperatives bring winemakers together to execute their harvests using cutting-edge technology and qualified staff. They offer a way to combine means, dollars, and expertise, over which the participating winemakers retain control and responsibility - and increasing independence.

Today, with more than 200 families involved in Caves de Lugny, including 50 new young winemakers which have joined recently, this co-op winery acts more like a technology incubator. Winemakers collaborate, create, and innovate, upholding the traditions of the Bourgogne region while keeping an eye on the future through technology, climate adaptations, sustainable and organic practices, and new marketing strategies. In addition, it offers young makers a way to pool and conserve resources, which in a field where starting anew is costly, can make the barrier to entry more attainable.

*A wine to try: Mâcon-Lugny, Les Charmes, blanc, 2018*

This wine is what many have come to love from a white Bourgogne wine. It is rich, silky, has popping acidity and all the lemony, apple saucy goodness that drives an instinctual craving. It is a delightfully rich, unoaked Chardonnay and a resounding example of how a good value wine can taste far above the price point.

**Domaine de la Cadette**

The Domaine de la Cadette is a family-run estate of 19.2 hectares in Vézelay, covering 18 plots in the four villages in the north of Bourgogne. Here we have a family that began its first harvest and vintage through a co-op. Jean and Catherine Montanet planted their first vineyard in 1990 and bottled their first vintage through a co-op in 1990. Their success in Vézelay played a large role in the region earning its own geographical denomination, becoming Bourgogne Vézelay in 1997 (and its own Village AOC in 2017, under the name Vézelay).

The Montanets continued to push the envelope with organic advancements in both viticulture and winemaking and were eventually financially sound and experienced enough to venture out on their own. In 2004, the Montanets established their own family label. Six years later, their son, Valentin Montanet joined the family to work in the vineyards following his viticulture and enology education at both a Swiss university and California winery.

Today, Valentin leads the family’s winery with a focus on organic farming and natural vinification to craft refreshing, mineral-driven whites and reds. He has further developed and expanded the negociant model by developing new grower contracts and bottling more and more wines, thereby increasing business by 15-20 percent year over year since 2013. With an ever-focused eye on the future, Valentin plans to focus his work on natural vinification and increased bottling, while modernizing marketing practices and increasing exports. He also plans to develop more long-term contracts with growers as well as encourage his partners to continue moving toward organic practices.

*A wine to try: 2. Vézelay, La Châtelaine, 2018 - Domaine La Cadette*

Chardonnay lovers and “some-timers” will find this to be an unoaked beauty. It’s a crisp, mineral-driven Chardonnay full of brightness, flavor and tension. It’s beautifully balanced and easy to both pair or sip on its own.

**Domaine Thevenot le Brun**

Domaine Thevenot le Brun, is located in the heart of the Hautes Côtes de Nuits region, in the town of Marey-les-Fussey, seven kilometers from Nuits-Saint-Georges and 10 kilometers from Beaune. For more than five generations, the family has been linked to winemaking in the Hautes Côtes and today they operate 30 hectares in the appellations Bourgogne Aligoté, Bourgogne Hautes Côtes de Nuits, and Bourgogne Hautes Côtes de Beaune.

At the helm today is Nicolas Thevenot, who began not as a winegrower or maker, but a water science engineer. As a hydrologist, he worked on a project to assess drought in Africa. In doing his research, he came to the realization that he needed to work in the outdoors and returned to his family vineyard in 2005.

After completing a harvest alongside his father and uncle, he then enrolled in a two-year apprenticeship in viticulture and winemaking in Beaune. He divided his time between Bourchard Père et Fils, the school, and the family estate. In 2007, he came to work with his father and uncle who retired shortly thereafter and sold the estate to Nicolas in 2015.

Since resuming sole ownership, Nicolas has generalized ploughing to make the vineyards increasingly natural with enhanced biodiversity. This year, the vineyards were certified organic with more than 1.5 hectares of newly planted vines and unplanted rented plots for expansion also achieved. Nicolas has also made improvements in winemaking in the cellar to enhance the freshness of the wines – made to drink now, but also to age. He plans to further expand bottling of the wines while increasing exports around the world.

*Wine to try: Bourgogne Hautes Côtes de Nuits, Les Renardes, rouge, 2019*

Les Renardes gives way to fresh fruit aromas with notes of both red and black currants. It’s a well-structured now, but with a year or two more, the tannins will soften and lend toward an already developing complex and aromatic wine with notes of undergrowth, earth and soft fruit flavors lacing the palate.

**Domaine Ninot**

The Ninot family has been coopers and winemakers since the 14th century with the current generation’s grandfather being one of the spearheads of the Rully AOC. However, with his passing the family land was divided five ways. The current generation’s patriarch, Pierre-Marie, saved his five hectares, expanded it further through buyouts and rentals, and began building the family’s heritage back up to its original form.

His children, Erell Ninot and Flavien Ninot have since joined their father at the helm of the winery. Erell is university trained in winemaking, but also traveled abroad to study in numerous regions. She returned in 2001 and in a bold and selfless move, her father turned over the entirety of operations to Erell in 2003. In her role, she expanded her father’s five hectares to 13 and also began practicing organic viticulture. Erell also instituted bottling at the winery and now markets 50 percent of the family’s wines internationally.

Flavien Ninot first went into cooperage, but the call of the vines was strong, so he returned to work in the vineyards with his sister and father in 2013. He leads the charge in vigorous manual vineyard work, resulting in low yields and exceptional concentration and led the vineyards through organic certification. The young siblings have additional plans to implement certain aspects of biodynamic viticulture, potentially expand with the right vineyard opportunity, plant more trees on-site for greater biodiversity, develop longer aging operations, and institute more sustainable methods for exporting wine.

*Wine to try: Rully, Chapponière, rouge, 2017 - Domaine Ninot*

The red wines of Domaine Ninot are known to be plump with poised fruit flavors and soft tannins. The 2017 Chapponière is no exception. It is elegant with cherries dominating the palate and a light oakiness for structure.

Each generation hopes to instill a legacy, to leave behind something of value, while guiding the next generation toward even greater success and fulfillment. As we begin to witness, and experience, the work, the talent and the art of this next generation, it’s fast becoming evident they will not only carry the torch, but also cast its light even further.