While Burgundy's elite domaines continue to dominate headlines and auction blocks, a quieter revolution has been unfolding—and in recent years, it has become impossible to ignore. A new generation of winemakers—self-starters, relentless in their pursuit of quality—is carving out its place in one of the world's most exclusive wine regions. For them, micro-négoce isn't just a stepping stone; it's a movement redefining what Burgundy means today—more precisely, some started as far back as early 2000s, while the most recent have just released their first vintage.

Those who regularly read the wine press are well aware of the stratospheric rise of (neo)micro-négociant projects in Burgundy—in quantity, in quality, and in pricing. A younger generation is pushing forward wines from previously cold and less successful appellations, which, thanks to climate change, are now yielding increasingly promising results. Meanwhile, winemakers who arrived in the region 10, 15, or even 20 years ago have built strong, trusted relationships with growers of renowned Premier and Grand Cru vineyards. Now, they can offer the insatiable market something highly sought after—even if it's only in quantities of one or two barrels at most.

If you don't follow major wine publications too often, let me say it now: micro-négoce projects aren't just trendy—they are just as integral to contemporary Burgundy as historic domaines and their heirs. For most newcomers to Burgundy, and for vignerons without a winemaking lineage, this is the only viable entry point—the path leading toward their ultimate dream: establishing their own Maison or—in future—a full-scale Domaine. More often than not, they will seize any opportunity to acquire even the smallest piece of this precious land when the timing is right. Many will continue to straddle both identities—négociant and grower-winemaker—because it's a way to survive, mitigate risks, and push forward despite whatever challenges arise.

This 'round table' brings together micro-négociants from different generations who have come from across the world—France, the U.S., Germany, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, and beyond. Some have managed to acquire their own vineyards, while others continue to buy fruit, rent plots, and—for many personal reasons—will do so for years to come, without any ambition to scale up or commit to a single piece of land forever. What unites them is a shared philosophy, both in the vineyard and in the cellar: organic viticulture (many advocate for biodynamics as well, persuading farmers to transition if they haven't already), indigenous yeasts, old oak barrels (alongside concrete, stoneware, and glass vessels), careful consideration of punch-downs and pump-overs, and the lowest possible sulfur levels (often limited to bottling).

Throughout January, we exchanged conversations via Zoom and email—though I couldn't reach every name that looms larger than life in the wine world. It was an enriching, deeply educational experience, and I believe it's worth sharing. So here they are.

Mark Haisma

Mark Haisma moved from Australia to Burgundy in 2007. In 2012, he launched his own winery, now based in Gilly-les-Citeaux, focusing on low-intervention techniques. He also has projects in the Northern Rhône.

Photo: archive of Mark Haisma

What are the main obstacles you face as a grower and as a négociant, aside from acquiring fruit or vineyards?

I've not really met a lot of obstacles. I'm a bit of a bulldozer in character—if there's something I want, I'm going to find the most direct route to get it. But all the paperwork here is heavy. I remember in Australia, we would do a deal, shake hands, have a pint of beer, and the job was done. You know, it's quite different here.

I started vinifying in 2009, so that was very much négoce. I would not like to start now—no way. I mean, it's a fight to get hold of good fruit. There's stuff out there, but so much of it is now tied up in swapping. If I want your Chassagne-Montrachet, I need to put something up to get a seat at the table. Now that I've got Gevrey and my own vineyards, that gives me leverage to get in on these deals. But if you don't have those connections, or if you're not the kid of a domaine owner, you're not going to get as much traction, I'd say. There are a lot of new négoce businesses popping up—I don't quite know how they manage to get hold of some of these fancy appellations.

How long did it take you to acquire your first plot after starting the négoce business?

I started in 2009, and in 2017, by chance, we bought two hectares in the Mâcon. Then, two years later, we took over control of two hectares in Gevrey-Chambertin.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how farmers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

In the beginning, I had to accept what was put in front of me. I could either make wine or not make wine—so I chose to make it. But I worked with one guy early on who was a full-on chemical junkie. He sprayed everything. We started talking, and I think where I've been successful is in building relationships. Slowly, I convinced him to do

things differently, and he saw it was possible. He saw that he didn't have to use weed sprays, and now he doesn't. The health of the vineyard has improved. We're seeing better grass species returning, and overall, the vineyard is in better shape.

There's a lot of talk about organic viticulture, but if you actually come here and count how many vineyards aren't organic, you'll see we're still in the minority. The organic movement in Burgundy has a long way to go. But people listen—you just have to be sensible.

Speaking of your own vineyards, what choices do you make as a grower?

All my vineyards are certified organic. 2024 was a very tough year, and when we get vintages like this, we see the limits of organics. Some of my friends dropped their organic status in 2024 because it was just too difficult. But for me, it's necessary—it's my philosophy, and it's the direction I want to go.

We do a lot of work on soil regeneration. We practice a one-on-two row uncultivated system, planting native grass species to bring back a more diverse population of bugs and insects. That's a big project. Another big one is adapting canopy height to deal with warming conditions and extreme temperature variations.

Once I'm in the winery, I'm a lazy winemaker. My winemaking is based on very clean, mature, pH-balanced fruit. It becomes an observational process—I just guide it through to its finish, which it will do naturally. It doesn't need my intervention. I don't have to use enzymes to get things going. I don't use lab yeasts. I use minimal sulfur, but I do use it, especially at bottling. The fruit is key, so I'm very strict with sorting. I pick with my team—I don't just sit in the winery waiting for fruit to arrive. I'm out there, guiding my pickers so exactly what I want goes into the baskets.

You have a wide range of different cuvées, including Premier and Grand Crus. How did that all come together?

In the beginning, you don't have options. You take what you're offered and go, "Oh wow, amazing, thank you." I remember when I was offered a Pommard Premier Cru. I thought, Do I really want to be making a Pommard? It has that rustic feel. Then I saw the vineyard—old vines, stunning site. So I said yes, but I adapted. I made a style of Pommard that fits my taste—more aromatic, lifted, elegant.

My approach to the négoce side of the business is all about the vineyard. I've been in vineyards since 1999, so I have a few years under my belt now. I feel like I have a good grip on what's in a vineyard and how it's farmed. If I don't like a vineyard, I say no. That's how I maintain the quality I'm looking for.

How was 2024 different from your usual production?

I normally have around 10 barrels. In 2023, we did about 12. In 2024, we did two.

Again, this goes back to my commitment to organics. I wasn't going to abandon that just because of one tough year. But I know other people who said, "No way, we're not sacrificing our crop just to stay organic." I get it, and I'm not criticizing that choice, but it wasn't a choice I was willing to make. I took the loss.

That said, we have a cellar full of 2022

and 2023 wines—some great wines. Burgundy has enough stock in reserve to pull through 2024.

What distribution methods do you find most effective or important for your wine?

I'm a bit unique. I have a direct mailing list. I'm an Aussie at heart—I come from a wine world where access to the public is encouraged, and I'm open for tastings. But my list is private. It's not online, and it's only for private customers, not professionals. They handle their own deliveries or pickups. But they get a great price, and it's two months before any importer gets the wines.

It works. I've built a loyal following. Then, after that, the wines go through more traditional routes—importers, merchants, restaurants. So I play both sides, but in a very clear and dynamic way. And it's honest. If anyone on my list starts selling on the secondary market, they're off. People who buy my wine buy it to drink it.

I also don't do minimum orders. I don't force people to buy less prestigious appellations just to access Grand Crus. I'm hopelessly romantic about business—I believe in equal opportunity. Some people can't afford Grand Cru, but maybe they want to try a Premier Cru. Why should Burgundy limit access only to the rich? I don't get it.

We're all complaining that young people are drifting away from Burgundy, or from wine. But look at how the top of the wine world operates—it's exclusive, not inclusive. I'm making wine in one of the greatest corners of the world, and I'm not going anywhere. My arms are open to anyone who's interested.

Having experience in very hot wine regions, does that help you prepare for climate change in Burgundy?

I think the answer comes from Australia. We've been dealing with heat instead of cold.

The first hot vintage I really experienced here was 2018. A lot of my growers were still in Saint-Tropez, drinking rosé in their neon Speedos. And I'm saying, "Hey guys, come on, shake a tail. The fruit's ready!" They said, "Oh no, we're coming back in two weeks."

I told them, "The fruit will be fucked by then. If you want me to buy it, I go pick now." That was a tense moment.

If you're not reactive, you'll end up with overripe grapes, high pH, volatile acidity—and in the end, a crappy wine. Let's not forget: Burgundy is still capable of making crappy wine too.

Nick and Colleen Harbour of Maison Harbour

Nick, originally from the U.S., met Colleen, born in Canada and raised in Luxembourg, during high school. After falling in love and returning to Luxembourg in 2008, they worked in finance before pursuing their dream of winemaking in France, settling in Savigny-lès-Beaune in 2012. They established Maison Harbour, where other winemakers like Joachim Skyaasen (Maison Skyaasen), Partick Johnston and Sara Cunningham (Si Tu Sais), and Niko Meyer (Maison Meyer) began their journeys.

Photo: archive of Maison Harbour

What are the main changes you see in the négociant business in Burgundy since you started?

Nick: I think that your question about the relevance of négociants today is really important. Because when we started 13 years ago, there was a handful, I don't know, like 200 registered négociants in the Côte d'Or. And today there's like 200,000, I mean, it's like every single estate has a négociant side of the business. A lot of people have come and started négociant businesses. So the négociant game has really blown up—not only people like us who've come from abroad but also our neighbors here in Savigny with their own estates. They've grown up watching their parents make Savigny-lès-Beaune, but they always wanted to make Gevrey-Chambertin. So today, they trade some fruit, get some Gevrey, and have fun making wines from other terroirs. So I think the biggest change over our time here has been the kind of explosion of négociants.

Colleen: That, and the prices. Thirteen years ago, we thought it was really expensive.

Nick: So I think it's the whole story of the Côte d'Or. For the last 20 years, prices have increased basically every year.

There's also a lot of speculation in the market. You can't really resist; it's happening because of the supply and demand dynamics.

Nick: We all kind of look around, and we understand that we're moving a little bit in a bad direction, increasing prices every year. We look down at Bordeaux as an example. Bordeaux is a bit of a different story because there's much more production there. It's a bit less scarce. But it didn't finish well for them. And we ask each other here, well, what's the driving force behind this? We can say scarcity is one factor, growing demand another. But is it the people selling fruit? Is it the people selling

wine? Is it the people buying wine? It's difficult to say, because it's a function of all of those inputs. So when we think about what we can do to address this and slow it down, it's very hard, because everybody wants to point at someone else. They say, “Oh, but if I don't sell my wine this expensive, I only make 2,000 bottles, and someone will buy all of them and resell them for twice as much money. So in some way, raising my price allows me to distribute more evenly into the market.” I mean, there are reasons for everything. It's a very tricky time in terms of price.

I've known that from the beginning, you were lucky enough to start with not just communal wines but also Premier Crus. Have you had a clear idea from the start of what Maison Harbour should be like?

Nick: We like drinking wine. When I go down into my cave and look at a bottle of whatever it happens to be—a Haute-Côte de Beaune, something like that—or I look next to it and see a Puligny-Montrachet Premier Cru, I have a slight preference to go towards the Crus and the higher appelations. It means it's a sort of special moment. So I think we had a little bit of a preference. When we started, we did mostly Premier Cru and Grand Cru wines. But this question is a bit of an illusion, because we don't choose what we make. I don't go out and say, "I want to make Chambertin this year." It's about your relationships with local people here who own vineyards, who are farming, and what you can get access to. A lot of négociants starting today have portfolios made up mostly of regional wines because it's the easiest to get into. There's the most of it, and so it's the cheapest. When someone starts a business, it's very easy to start at the lower end and sort of work up, having maybe a couple of flagship wines and then finding more and more. When we started, there wasn't as much competition as there is today for buying fruit. And we happened to be in a class at wine school with a group of really great people, and we made a wonderful network here, where we got access to some really serious fruit. We were very happy to start with that. And still today, there is a focus on trying to find really good fruit. But there are two pieces to that: actually having access to it, and ensuring that it's good quality, farmed well, and reasonably priced. Sometimes it's for sale because it's terrible quality, the farming is horrible or nonexistent. So you might have access to something, but it’s not something you really want.

Does maintaining continuity in the production of the same range of wines feel important to you?

Nick: Maybe over the last 10 years, there's been a push toward the importance of the producer, and arguably today, that producer is almost trumping terroir. What I mean by that is, when I'm at a restaurant, maybe I want to drink a Chambolle-Musigny, and they have a few options on the list, but they’re from people whose winemaking style I’m not a big fan of—whether it’s too oaky or too extractive, whatever, it's not my style. I might go for a wine from a different producer that I know makes wines in the style that I like. I might choose that over what I actually want.

So coming back to your question of whether or not continuity is important. I think for us, for smaller négociants, it's less and less important. It’s more

important that we make our stylistic statement, and people either connect with that or they don't. They say, "I love your white wines." If I make a Pernand-Vergelesses this year, they're probably going to be happy to try it because they know our style of white is what they like to drink. And if it's not there next year, sometimes that's even fun because it's like, "I get to see this terroir from your eyes, but it's just a glimpse." On the other side, it is complicated because the more you work with a terroir, the more you understand it. You don't take grapes from a vineyard and make the best wine on your first attempt. You're going to make the best wine after you've made that wine for several years in a row. That said, we're not making a lot of vineyard-specific decisions in our winemaking. We like our winemaking to be very consistent from one terroir to another so that when you drink our wines, the differences that are highlighted come from the terroir rather than our stylistic decisions.

So it's a bit of a confusing answer to the question of consistency. Of course, for selling wine in the traditional sense of importer, distributor, it's much better to have consistency because they have markets where people know specific wines. It's easy. They don't have to do as much work, whereas when you have a new terroir, you have to go out and show it to people.

If we talk about distribution, what are the most important channels?

Nick: For Colleen and me, direct-to-consumer sales are definitely the most important. It's the best price for the consumer. It's the best price for us as the producer. It's a great price for the grower of the fruit. And the difference for us between a really great wine and an exceptional wine is knowing the story, being connected with the people and the place. People want to be connected. They want to know where the products they're buying are coming from, who the people involved are. And so we think that the direct-to-consumer market in the future is going to be bigger and bigger.

Certain markets can work through professionals, but people still have a direct relationship with us. They're able to talk with us about what they want to order, and then maybe the order is fulfilled, the logistics are handled through an importer or distributor in a certain market. But I like this idea of connecting directly with people, and it's also something that, as a very small producer, we're able to do. Now that Colleen and I are making something like 100 barrels of wine a year—which is almost 30,000 bottles—it's harder to connect with as many people as we would need to sell everything directly to consumers.

I think traditional market distribution is important too, because it can put us in restaurants in London and New York and San Francisco, and those restaurants are important to stay kind of relevant in the market. And so there's a good place for traditional distribution.

What are the most common and hardest obstacles micro-négociants face?

Nick: I said finding fruit, which doesn't really need to be discussed. But the second side that Colleen highlighted was financing it, because it takes two years until you're able to sell it. So yeah, everyone that's doing premise—I mean, it's a great way to finance the operation for that year moving forward.

For a small négociant, it's ideal—unless you come with bags of money. It's important that you get some kind of crowd support in the beginning to help cover some of your startup expenses.

Well, we started briefly to speak about the style of the wines. So what are the most important winemaking choices you make to express the terroir?

Colleen: Well, I think first, when we can, we don't use new oak. I don't know if it's the most important. Extraction—not over-extracting.

Nick: I think the more inputs you have into the wine, the less the actual wine has to say, and the more the process of winemaking has to say. You're chaptalizing, you're heating up, you're cooling down, pumping over, punching down—you're creating something.

It's such a tricky one for me because it's not that I can't tell you that's not terroir. I mean, it's okay—besides chaptalizing—if you punch down a lot, if you heat up, cool down, filter, whatever, that's the grapes telling their story. So I think it's a tricky one for us.

In the beginning, at least for red wine, we destemmed all of our Pinot Noir. And all of our hipster friends, they tell us, like, "Well, who drinks destemmed fruit anymore?" I mean, everybody drinks whole cluster, right? And it's true—whole cluster is very, very popular today because it makes very fruity, very expressive, aromatic, very pleasing wines. But for me personally, when it's done to the extreme, whole cluster really marks the wine. And when I smell a whole-cluster wine, even if it's Pinot Noir, I often think right away of Beaujolais, because Beaujolais made this style of winemaking popular.

Or actually, no—it could be Pinot, but it's made with carbonic maceration. Whole cluster. Secondary to the making of that wine, is the terroir. Which is why we choose to destem—because, in our opinion, when you smell a destemmed wine, you smell more nuances of the terroir rather than the winemaking process. The same for oak, the same for sugar, the same for extraction. The more you push out in that way, the more muddled the actual voice of the parcel is.

Colleen: But, you know, we've only been doing this for 10 years, so we're still learning. And the older generation is probably like, "What the hell is happening here?" and "What's going on?" So I think it will be interesting to see where things go, because today, maybe that's what people like, but in 10, 20 more years, things might change again.

Nick: And yeah, preferences change. I mean, back in the day in Burgundy—let's say 30, 40 years ago—it was really important that they made big, high-alcohol, dark-colored, extracted, oaky wines that could compete with wines from other regions like Bordeaux, Spain, Italy. And now, in the last 15, 20 years, there's been a real shift.

What is unique about our climate and place is that Pinot Noir and Chardonnay ripen just enough. We save a lot of acidity because we have really cool evenings and nights, and that finesse and elegance is what makes us stand apart from the rest—we don't need to compete with Bordeaux. If you want a big, 18%, dark, inky wine—go get it. If you want a light, 11.5–12%, very rosé, light-colored Pinot that's fruity and delicious—come to Burgundy.

Today, more than ever, we're really celebrating the fact that we have this elegance and finesse. And some of us are actually quite concerned, because with the climate changing the way it is, we're having more and more big, warm years that are producing higher-alcohol, less finessed and elegant Pinots and Chardonnays.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how growers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

Nick: The truth is that Burgundy is a real seller's market. There's more demand than there is supply. And if you're selling grapes in Burgundy, you have a lineup of 100 people who will buy them. So the control that négociants have in the vineyards is minimal and grows with relationships.

But I would say that most of us have very little control. And even when we feel we have control—I mean, this past vintage, we had been sampling, we were going out in the vineyard every two, three days. We selected our harvest date. And then we had a telephone call from the grower, and the grower said, "You have to pick it tomorrow."

And it's like, "Well, okay... we were under the impression that we're picking it, that we're going there."

And they go, "You don't need to bother about it, but my neighbor is going to pick there, and they're going to park their tractor here. And basically, if you want the fruit, you should come tomorrow and pick it."

At the end of the day, they're selling the fruit, and we're buying it.

Do you have your own space for vinification and aging?

Nick: We have all of our facility here in Savigny-lès-Beaune: a white wine facility on one side, a red wine facility on the other. We have several different cellars. We're in the historical center of the village. It's a small village of something like 1,000 people, so it's really old buildings, and that's wonderful. It's very beautiful. It's very romantic. But it's obviously not as convenient as having an industrial, one-level facility where you can drive a forklift everywhere.

But we like it. It's right at our home, so we're here all the time. For us, it's really a lifestyle business. We like connecting with people and everything around wine. So it's really been a dream for us to be here.

And because we were lucky enough to have the support of people being passionate about wine, coming to try and learn more—as we've grown and had more space, we've often offered other people who are starting out a place to come and make wines here. We get to share equipment, we get to share thoughts, we get to discuss things. And then they kind of get on their feet, buy their own small facilities, and go out and make their own wines.

I think there are maybe five wineries today where people started their careers here, working with us, and now they've started their own labels, their own négociant operations, and are out there making wine.

Catharina Sadde of Les Horées

Former auctioneer Guilhem from Dijon and ex-chef Catharina Sadde from Germany founded Les Horées in 2019. They first met in 2010 during her internship at Domaine Chevrot in Cheilly-lès-Maranges. Officially négociants, they also own plots in Pommard, Volnay, and Puligny. Their cellar is located in Beaune, right across from the train station.

Photo: archive of Les Horées

What are the most common obstacles micro-négociants face?

We are talking about Burgundy—Burgundians are very suspicious, quite traditional, and old-fashioned folks. One cannot skip certain steps; that is not appreciated. Once you earn their trust, you still must prove over and over again that you are worth it. That's the human aspect.
From a business point of view, the biggest obstacles are finding affordable, quality grapes and finding vineyards. Moreover, it took us three years to find an appropriate cellar. For a new winery like ours, it was very important to have an old building. But the biggest challenges are administrative—it is enough to pull out your hair!
Unfortunately, grape prices have gone up tremendously—it is more and more difficult to really earn some money at the beginning of your adventure, especially if you have to buy equipment, renovate a cuverie, pay salaries, etc., without having any cash flow. The Damocles sword hanging over our heads is climate change and the natural risks we are facing. Fluctuations in terms of quality, yield, and working conditions in the field can vary tremendously from one year to another. Psychologically, that is very hard to take, and you have to have a long-term vision. Again, if you are a new domaine or micro-négociant, you do not really have a buffer, and you need to search for and find solutions to adapt and make it work.

Does maintaining continuity in producing the same range of wines feel important to you?

That is very important to me, to work coherently and sustainably. The longer and better I know my plots, the better wine I make. We start to grow on each other, and I understand the vines better, no matter the changes in the years. 2024 was supposed to be the year where I stabilize my production in terms of volumes and produced wines and appellations, but Mother Nature had other plans.
I am proud to have 4.1 ha, which is a decent surface to work with, and I established some long-term relationships with some suppliers for our grape purchases. For me, being a micro-négociant is not really my choice. I am quite convinced of biodynam-

ics—actually, it does not make sense to buy fruit from others if you want to focus on biodynamics and search for an individual expression in your wines. In approximately seven to ten years, I will be almost independent from grape purchases because our three plantations will bear fruit eventually. Besides “la perle rare,” which means finding organic grapes from a beautiful appellation to which we could never have access to farm.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how farmers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

In some cases, you do not have any influence on the farming. In our case, we could establish a good relationship with some of the owners, and finally, we are farming their plots (two in Savigny, one in Pernand, and one in Volnay—it is called 'prestation' in French). With others, it is easy because we have the same viticultural ideas, but I already stopped working with some growers because their ideas were opposing to ours. After six years of Les Horées' existence, I do not want to make those kinds of compromises anymore. The quality of the grapes is the most important, especially for the high prices we have to pay for the grapes in Burgundy!
2024 was very hard in so many ways, but especially one encounter made me very sad. A conventional vigneron who already agreed that I treat his plots organically and even do the manual work with my team stopped our collaboration because “It is the fault of biodynamics and organic viticulture that we do not have the full authorized yields, and I lose money with you.” Money is always the last argument here... Then, in October 2024, we acquired a beautiful new plot—a Beaune Premier Cru—and the condition for the purchase was that it be organic. I regained faith.

Why do you think the new wave of micro-négociant projects in recent years has become so popular, with their wines being highly sought after?

I am convinced, the success of most of us would not have been so fast without social media. Even though in my case, I worked in Burgundy in several domaines for eight years—which means I could already establish some relationships that are very dear and helpful to me. Especially, my winemaking friends were the best ambassadors when we founded Les Horées, and their contacts knocked on our cellar door before the bottling of the first vintage.
In general, I am very afraid of hypes—I do not want to be a hype. We founded this incredible company to last, and we made a lot of sacrifices and commitments. All I am looking for is stability and profound and personal client relationships. Domaines exist over several generations. Owning land in Burgundy is not a hype. That is my approach because I really see myself more like a domaine and not just micro-négociant. Some micro-négociants are passionate projects of wine aficionados—that is great, too.

What distribution methods do you find most effective or important for your wines, and are there any methods to prevent speculation?

We think having a good mix is important: some established wine import companies, some newcomers (like us), loyal partners in the region (the whole wine world travels to Beaune!), and recently we are looking into being closer to private clients.
Allocations are casse-tête!
Speculations: Pfff, what a topic. Sometimes we talk more about that than the wines; it is very frustrating. It is such an artificial situa-

tion and seems very abstract to me. We sell our wines ex-cellar door between €23–50 for the 2023 vintage.

Can a new wine brand achieve success without including wines from cult Premier and Grand Crus in its portfolio?

I hope that is what Les Horées stands for. I have very good experiences. In one very fancy wine event, people would reach out their glasses for our Cuvée Mon Poulain (our Passe-tout-grain, Coteaux Bourguignons) as much as for our fellow winemaker next to us serving Grand Cru. That made me very proud.
The humbler appellations definitely have a story to tell, and the differences between a Bourgogne Rouge from Pommard or Savigny are intriguing and fun to show.
It will always be very important to us to have convincing and quality entrée-level wines, and it is only recently that we added several beautiful Premiers Crus. When it comes down to vinifying one day grapes from a Grand Cru plot, I am not in a hurry. First, I would like to have more vinification experience, and then the quality really must be outstanding. The financial burden (just imagine driving the truck full of grapes which are worth €60,000 for the equivalent of ONE barrel and you get stuck at 40°C outside) is too important, and people's expectations are very different.

Arnaud Lopez of Maison Pinot Noar

Arnaud Lopez was born in Burgundy but became seriously interested in winemaking at 35, starting his journey at Prieuré Roch, where he spent 15 years. After experimenting with natural wines at a young age, he began vinifying on his own as a micro-négociant only in 2018 and settled into his current cellar in Nuits-Saint-Georges three years later.

Photo: archve of Arnaud Lopez

What were your most valuable takeaways from working for Domaine Prieuré Roch?

Henry-Frédéric Roch was a man of conviction, a visionary. Coming from a traditional winemaking family, he nevertheless began vinifying wines without sulfites in the early '90s. Many winemakers criticized him, but he didn't care...
My maternal grandfather had Nuits-Saint-Georges Premier Cru and

Village vineyards. I, too, come from this tradition, but I have always been drawn to organic viticulture and natural wines. In 1988, I started harvesting and helping with vinification alongside childhood friends. Wooden vats, whole-cluster fermentation, minimal intervention... Later, after gaining experience at various other estates, I found these same characteristics, that same taste, in the wines of Domaine Prieuré Roch. That's why I decided to work with Henry in 2007. I learned how to vinify wines without additives. So naturally, when I started my own négociant business, I followed the same approach.

Among the wines and cuvées you produce, both red and white, which would you say best express the essence of Arnaud Lopez as a winemaker? How would you describe the style of your wines?

I hope that all my wines express their terroir and vintage. They are not altered by sulfites, sugar, yeasts, thiamine, or any other oenological additives.

What are the most common obstacles micro-négociants face?

I don't have written contracts with my grape suppliers, so I'm entirely dependent on their goodwill. Even though they are friends, I still face weather-related uncertainties and the question of whether or not they'll want to help me. It's stressful. To strengthen my relationships, I try to help them with vineyard work whenever I can. I can't buy grapes if I don't know the vineyard or have a connection with the grower. I'd love to secure some vineyards under lease to ensure a stable supply.

Does maintaining continuity in producing the same range of wines feel important to you?

Yes, of course. At the very least, for buyers who have come to appreciate specific cuvées—it would be disappointing for them if a wine suddenly disappeared from one year to the next. And from a vinification standpoint, it's important too. You become familiar with a terroir, with how the vinification process unfolds... Changing everything every year can be exciting, but having signature cuvées is what gives a domaine its identity.

What are your thoughts on vinification in alternative vessels like concrete eggs, ceramic amphoras, and glass globes? Have you used any of these?

Yes. To offset the use of new barrels—which I have to buy, despite not being a fan of overly oaky wines—I've purchased 400L and 250L ceramic vessels. As I mentioned earlier, even though I make natural wines, I also love traditional wines. I love wines that have been aged in oak barrels.

Are there specific adjustments you've made (or plan to make) in response to climate change?

I think that with increasing heatwaves and droughts, fermentation issues and rising volatile acidity—like what we saw in 2022—are likely to become recurring problems. I've never worked with pied de cuve before, but maybe it could help prevent these issues?

What is the production level for Maison Pinot Noar cuvées in a good year versus a bad year? What cuvées are the largest and smallest?

Given the way I work in the winery, I can vinify around fifty barrels in good years. For my business to remain viable, the minimum

is 40. I produce cuvées ranging from 3 to 6 barrels, depending on the capacity of my vats (10, 12, 15, or 20hl).

Do you see strong potential for Pinot Blanc in Burgundy?

Here, Chardonnay and Aligoté are the most common. To create a different style of white wine and diversify my range of cuvées, I decided to make my Pinot Blanc as a maceration wine.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how farmers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

I've been working in organic vineyards since 2003, so I have quite a bit of experience. As I mentioned earlier, most of my suppliers are people I know well, so we talk about farming methods, soil health, treatments. I'm also lucky to be able to take part in some of the vineyard work to support them. Of course, I only buy grapes from organic farming.

Why do you think the new wave of micro-négociant projects in recent years has become so popular, with their wines being highly sought after?

Fortunately, as you mention, there is a new wave of winemakers who aren't burdened by family tradition or convention. Men and women without preconceived notions, who can make wines as they like—without following rigid customs, without caring about what others think. For them, wine is nothing more than the fermentation of grapes—without automatically adding sulfites, yeasts, or other inputs! They refuse to be boxed in by oenologists or sommeliers with tunnel vision, who think they have a monopoly on taste!

What distribution methods do you find most effective or important for your wines, and why?

I only produce 12,000 bottles per year. Twelve cuvées of 900 bottles—that's not much. Luckily, I know and appreciate the wine merchants, restaurateurs, and international agents I sell to. I sell half of my production directly to consumers because I know that in certain regions, my wines are hard to find, and with speculation, they can be sold at ridiculous prices...

Is there a particular lieu-dit or climat you dream of adding to your portfolio?

Of course! I'm from Nuits-Saint-Georges. My education, my love for wine—it all started here. What a dream it would be to vinify Gevrey, Morey, Chambolle, Vosne... and Nuits! My father had a restaurant here in the '80s and '90s. I was young then, and people like Henry-Frédéric Roch and Philippe Engel would come to eat and celebrate. I could see their generosity, their humor, their intelligence. Some became my friends, others my mentors... in short, they became my peers.

Bastian ‘Basti’ Wolber of Laisse Tomber

German winemaker Bastian Wolber's first vintage was in 2019 in Baden, Germany, followed by 2020 in Auxey-Duresses at Chris Santini's winery and 2021 in Volnay at a small estate above Pousse d'Or, while he was still working for Jean-Yves Bizot. His first full vintages were in 2022 and 2023. His younger brother Christoph is a co-founder of Wasenhaus.

Photo: archive of Bastian Wolber

What are the most common and hardest obstacles micro-négociants face?

The first challenge is leaving one's training company, where one is usually still employed full-time.
You have to be fully committed to your own project—going to check on fermentations after finishing a full day of work elsewhere, continuing the process, and responding to the needs of your wines.
The main difficulty is balancing employment with the mental focus required for winemaking, which can be particularly challenging in years when fermentations are slow and require attention.
This situation can lead to misunderstandings between employer and employee.
Additionally, winemaking requires significant upfront investment, and it can take up to two years before the first wines are bottled and sold. Liquidity problems are therefore a foreseeable challenge.
Securing vineyard land in Burgundy is particularly difficult, and finding the right plots at affordable prices is a major obstacle. Not only have the prices for bottles and land (vines) risen, but so have real estate prices in general.

Does maintaining continuity in producing the same range of wines feel important to you?

I think it's wonderful to vinify a terroir over several years and, ideally, to work the vines myself—observing what would benefit the vineyard most in order to produce the best possible grapes and reflect the terroir in the wine. Every year brings new lessons.

What are your thoughts on vinification in alternative vessels like concrete eggs, ceramic amphoras, and glass globes?

I find all these materials very interesting and am always happy to taste the results with colleagues. They expand the range of tools available to winemakers, giving us more opportunities to express terroir and vintage. Personally, however, I am still focused on understanding the influence of wooden barrels in all their forms, sizes, stave thicknesses, and toasting levels.

What is the production level for Laisse Tomber cuvées in a good year versus a bad year? What cuvées are the largest and smallest?

Our small négoce line, "Laisse Tomber," which sources grapes from winegrowers whose work I highly appreciate, covers about 3 hectares per year—approximately 15,000 to 17,000 bottles. In addition to my own vines, this still accounts for 50% of our total production today. The largest cuvées are Bourgogne and Gamay.

Do you aspire to eventually operate as a winery with entirely owned vineyards?

My dream has always been to cultivate my own small vineyards and make wine from them year after year. If you don't come from a winemaking family and choose to stay in a more expensive region, you need a strategy. Buying grapes can be a helpful starting point, and there are many ways to do it. If you build good relationships with growers and develop a level of trust, you can produce beautiful small-scale négoce wines. Today, we work just over 4 hectares, thanks in part to the winegrowers with whom we collaborated in the early days of the négoce.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how farmers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

To be honest, in the beginning, I spent much more time with the growers and even offered my help. Now that I have more of my own vines, I simply don't have the time. We still exchange ideas, but unless someone specifically asks for my input, my priority is my own vineyards.

Why do you think the new wave of micro-négociant projects in recent years has become so popular, with their wines being highly sought after?

Certainly, price developments in higher appellations have played a role. I also have the general impression that people are paying more attention to the producers themselves rather than just the appellation, which was not as common a few years ago.

What distribution methods and allocation strategies do you find most effective?

Well, I also like the idea of keeping the wine as much as possible in the region where it comes from. Not sure if that counts as a distribution strategy.

Icy Liu

Originally from Taiwan, Icy Liu moved to New York and then to France, where she earned her Wine MBA with Distinction from the Burgundy School of Business and an Oenology Diploma from the University of Burgundy. Since 2019, she has worked for Becky Wasserman & Co. In 2022, her own winemaking became possible when her friend Bastian Wolber offered her organic Gamay from a grower who previously sold grapes to Ganevat. She vinified these grapes at Chris Santini's winery in Auxey-Duresses. In 2023, Icy vinified her wines in Bastian Wolber's cellar in Volnay and found a small cellar in Meursault for élevage.

I was really fascinated to hear the story about how Bastian Wolber shared the grapes he bought, and that's how you started. How common it is in the Burgundy winemaker community?

It's actually quite common. In general, there's a very friendly ambiance among newcomers, and many of us are friends. Everyone tries to help each other out whenever possible. In 2023, I vinified my entire production at Bastian's cellar in Volnay. I was able to taste his wines during vinification, and he could taste mine. We definitely share notes, and I often speak to friends on the phone when I encounter issues.

Speaking about the style of your wines, how would you describe them? What did you have in mind when you started?

People often say, 'You need to remove the winemaker from the terroir,' which is true, but you still can't deny the human influence on it, right? That's why I picked all my cellar internships very carefully. I chose places where I really enjoyed the wines and wanted to learn how they make them, hoping to eventually adapt my winemaking to be similar to theirs. In my mind, it was Claire Naudin, Chanterêves, and Basti Wolber—those three are all about whole cluster. I also worked with Frédéric Mugnier in 2021; he's different, using 100% destemming, but I definitely learned some things from him too. So, my idea when I first started was to exist in the space between super classic wines and very natural wines. I wanted to find a balance in the middle, where there's fluidity and easy drinking. Throughout the three vintages I've worked, it was always about honing that balance, making adjustments to fit the terroir and the vintage. For example, in 2022, my first vintage, I didn't want to add too much sulfur, but the volatile acidity was really going crazy. You adapt based on what you've learned while applying it to your own wines. I always remember what Tomoko from Chanterêves

Photo: arhive of Icy Liu

taught me: 'When making wines, instead of relying solely on carbonic maceration, where you don't intervene, you need to perform pigeage and some form of extraction; otherwise, the terroir won't be expressed.' That's always stuck in my mind.

What are the most common obstacles that micro-négociants face?

First, I would say space is a significant limiting factor. In the past, my friend Chris Santini had a winery space in Auxey-Duresses, where a lot of domaines got started, like Bastian Wolber and Jonathan Purcell from Vin Noé. However, he stopped sharing the space because people started getting bigger and outgrew it. For many others, it's mostly about finding enough space at friends' wineries to see if they can lend you some space to make your own wine.
This year, there has been a new space in Chassagne-Montrachet called Wine Studio Les Pépites, where I think around 10 people who are just starting out are working together. I would describe it as a workspace for wineries, where each have their own little area, and we share two presses and a sorting table. The space is in an industrial area in Chassagne, so it's not very traditional or romantic, but it's highly functional and operational.
The second obstacle is finding sources for grapes. A lot of times, you can work through a courtier, which is like an agent who connects those wanting to sell grapes with micro-négociants who buy them. Alternatively, you can go directly through growers. Since we often don't have much capital or space, friends will sometimes team up. For example, if there's a grower selling a certain amount of grapes, you can divide the grapes among two or three friends. This way, you don't have to purchase a large quantity at once.

How can micro-négociants effectively control how the farmers or growers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

Many of them are certified organic, which means there's a governing body behind it. You have to trust them, and you can also visit the plot, talk to them, see the grapes, and ask how many treatments they've done that year. Ultimately, it's about building trust and developing relationships.

How open are they to particular suggestions or specific requirements?

I would say not very much. It depends on who you are. But for the most part, I would say we don't have much control over what's being done.

There are good years and bad years. Does maintaining continuity in producing the same range of wines feel important to you?

2024 wasn't the best year in terms of quantity, but the quality is pretty good. Another challenge for smaller growers and micro-négociants is to maintain consistency in their cuvées. If your existing plot or the one you've been working with doesn't produce enough grapes, you may have to work with another appellation. For example, in 2024, I had to create new cuvées and lost some of my old ones because there weren't enough grapes.

Were you able to have Savigny-lès-Beaune in 2024?

No, I couldn't. And for the Burgundy plot I shared with Bastian Wolber in 2023, I couldn't make that either.

Over the last few years, micro-négociant projects have

become quite popular. Since their production is so small, these wines have become highly sought after, driving prices up significantly, especially in the secondary market. Is the rise of secondary market prices and speculation an inevitable issue? Is there any way to change it?

But I guess it's just the market—if demand is high and people originally bought these wines for a relatively low price, it's human nature that most of them would want to sell for a profit, though, of course, some won't. I don't know, I haven't really come up with a solution. I mean, it's an issue that applies to so many things in the world—when there's a lot of interest and demand but not enough supply, prices naturally go up.

But it's definitely a problem. A lot of times, I feel like it sets an unrealistic expectation for how the wine is supposed to taste. Then people try it and say, 'Oh, it's not worth it.' Well, of course, it's not worth it—it's an exorbitant price to pay for a bottle of fermented grape juice, right?
I sell my wines at my friend's wine store in Beaune. I told him to make sure the people he sells to are actually going to consume the wines, and he shouldn't sell them to people he doesn't know. You can't control everything right away, but he limits purchases based on the grower. For instance, if it's Catharina from Les Horées, those wines are popular on the secondary market, so he allows each person to buy only one or two bottles.

Loïc Lamy of Vins Saisons

Loïc Lamy and Eric Pignal established Vin Saisons in 2019. Eric was previously an assistant winemaker at Château de Pommard before becoming the chief winemaker at Simon Bize, where he soon left. In addition to working on Vin Saisons, Loïc Lamy is currently an export manager at Domaine de Montille and runs the event company Hautes Cotes with his wife, Milena Berman.

Photo: archive of Loïc Lamy (Vins Saisons)

Is the micro-négociant model the easiest way to start your own business in Burgundy because of the price of the land?

The price of the land is everything. And I can complain and not complain at the same time, because we're very lucky to produce wines in Burgundy, one of the most sought-after regions in the world. If you don't come from the region, don't have land, and don't have sponsors to help you raise money to rent a plot to get started, then buying grapes is a better way than trying to buy land. So micro-négoce is one of the only ways to get started. I mean, most people who started their projects—just like us—worked a long time for different domaines,

and I wouldn't have been able to start if it weren't for these estates we worked for, because they helped us, knowingly or not, tremendously. We could borrow so much material, which is also very expensive, to make it work. So there's no better way.

What are the hardest obstacles that micro-négociants face?

I don't know if it's the right time to talk about the French administration, but that's a pretty heavy one. And I'm especially thinking of people who come from other countries—even for me, as a French person, where it's my mother tongue, it's not easy to understand what they want. Another obstacle is building relationships to find good fruit. And then finding a place to vinify, though that's not the hardest, because many of the houses built around here were built before refrigerators, so they have cellars—that helps.

Does maintaining continuity in your range of wines feel important to you?

The micro-négoce model allows you to be more flexible. For instance, one of the plots I've been working with since the very beginning is a Savigny-lès-Beaune. Over the last three vintages, I've found my style and how to vinify this plot. And I think the level keeps increasing because I understand the fruit better. So it's really nice to see that you can make better wines through consistency. But at the same time, there's always curiosity—to vinify something different, just to see what you can come up with. Of course, it's mostly a question for our partners, the people who are buying and distributing the wine. It's hard to create a market for a new wine if it's discontinued the year after. We try to keep the same allocations and production range year after year, as long as the weather allows us to—because we can't predict natural disasters.

Speaking about good and bad years, what kind of production volume do you have?

I don't rely solely on winemaking to make a living. My situation allows me to be more precise about what I really want. For instance, I won't buy fruit that's not organic. I don't feel the urge to purchase fruit just to make more wine and make my banker happy. So in a good year, meaning there's fruit to buy, I would go up to 3,000 bottles of production. My smallest vintage was 2021 when I made only 350 liters of wine, which I bottled in magnums only. That was by far the smallest vintage.

Why did you decide to bottle it in magnums rather than regular bottles?

First and foremost, I strongly believed that given the profile of the vintage, the wine would be even better in magnum. Second, I've been very lucky to have amazing partners, distributors, and importers, and it was hard to say, "Hey, there's not going to be wine for everyone this year." I mean, the volume was so small. So I figured if I produced magnums, I could give them the option to either pass on the allocation that year if it wasn't right for their market or, for those who love magnums, to buy everything they could. So I thought that was a good deal for everyone, basically.

Can micro-négociants effectively control how farmers treat the soil, vines, and fruit?

If the vineyards are certified organic, there's a state organization that controls how they farm—you can't cheat that. And when you

visit the plot, you generally get a good feeling about whether the viticulture is high quality or not. Most of the time, when it's organic, it's very qualitative.

What distribution methods and allocation strategies do you find most effective?

Because I buy organic grapes and make wine with as little intervention as possible, I don't see the point of shipping the wines to the other side of the world. So I sell most of it—about 50%—around Beaune, and the other 50% in countries bordering France, except for the United States. The U.S. is very dear to me, and my wife is American, so it's important for me to have the wines there.

Is there any Premier or Grand Cru you've really wanted to experiment with?

Many! The question is, how much can I afford if I want them to be organic? I have no idea how much organic Gevrey-Chambertin would cost, but clearly the price of a very beautiful German car for one barrel. So I think that hasn't really changed, which is why I'm interested in plots that are sort of under the radar.
This year, I'm very happy—I produced in 2024 a Beaune Premier Cru Les Boucherottes, which is right below Clos de Mouches, the first plot north of Pommard. This kind of plot I find very exciting because you get something that's close to the real deal, and yet you have a more attractive price. But if someday I could vinify some Chambolle-Musigny, I'd be very happy.
I grew up in a region where people don't care about wine, and sometimes friends or family members want to purchase a bottle. And I'm just a bit shy or embarrassed to say, "Hey, that's how much it costs." And, you know, it's not that I'm making a lot of money—I'm just paying a very high price for the fruit. If you're not extremely interested in wine, a 10-euro bottle or a 40-euro bottle—you don't really understand the difference, right?

What choices do you make as a winemaker to express the terroir the most?

To express reds the best, I am a big believer in stems. I think they bring more glory notes, especially with time, which I really love. I'm into very gentle vinification—with care, extra love. Every day, we take time to do it like a meditation.
Now it's becoming very clear to me that wines express themselves better in 350-liter barrels rather than 228, which is the tradition in Burgundy. So now I'm using almost exclusively 350L. I think it gives more verticality to the wines—now it's more nuanced, and I really enjoy that.
I have the same thoughts on the whites. I believe in gentle and long pressing, and I believe that two winters are good for the wine—one in the barrel and the second in a tank. I believe in lees; I love the reduction it brings. And again, with larger barrels, especially those that are 4-5-6 years old, with all the tartaric deposits and more lees due to the size of the barrel, you get a nice reduction. That's always nice, especially when you vinify with lower quantities of sulfur.

Do you own or rent a space for vinification and aging?

It's in my home. The vinification room is my garage, and the cellar is my house cellar. It's very impractical and not ideal, but it's also great in a vintage like 2021, when there was literally no wine—so I didn't have to pay rent for a big space. I want to have this flexibility.

Patrick Johnston of Si Tu Sais

In 2017, Patrick Johnston and Sara Cunningham thought it would be fun to work a harvest "one time" at Maison Harbour in Savigny-lès-Beaune. They stayed there and started making their own wine in 2020 at the same facilities. They are now based in Chamilly.

Photo: archive of Si Tu Sais

What are the main obstacles you face as a micro-négociant?

Finding great fruit that you love, finding people you want to work with, and working in a way that aligns with your values.

Do you feel any significant competition between micro-négociants?

Everybody's actually pretty collaborative in a way. I think there's been quite a big wave over the past couple of years—people coming to Burgundy. The 2022 and 2023 vintages were certainly larger crops, which provided more opportunities for people to get in.

You know, someone once described what we do as "a niche within a niche"—Burgundy itself is already quite niche, especially with prices where they are. It's not something everybody is drinking all the time. And even the bigger micro-négociants aren't making huge amounts of wine. None of them are producing millions of bottles or sitting on every supermarket shelf.

For example, if I'm selling 300 or 400 bottles to a single distributor in one country, that feels like a lot to me. But honestly, 400 bottles in a market is kind of nothing—it doesn't take many restaurants that each want at least six bottles for that to disappear. So you can find them in restaurants, but in wine shops, they vanish quickly.

Does maintaining continuity in producing the same range of wines feel important to you?

It's a slightly tricky question for me because we only started selling our wines independently in fall 2023. I think there are a few core appellations, and then we're just refining around the edges.

There was some variation at the beginning, but now there's more consistency. In 2022, we decided to make about 16 barrels in total. In 2023, we grew more—8,000 bottles in total—and that's the amount we want to maintain for now.

What distribution methods and allocation strategies do you find most effective?

Other people have a different story than us, I guess, because we haven't been selling

for that long. In the beginning, if people came to us interested in buying some wine, we were very happy to sell.

We had bought a house with space to build a winery, but we still had to pay for all the winery essentials—tanks, barrels, everything. So we were happy to trade wine for cash, and I think it went pretty well. Now we're a little more established, but we still have to manage cash flow. Fruit contracts for négociants in Burgundy typically work in three payments: December, March, and June.

Previously, our élevage process was purely driven by logistics—new fruit arrives, so there has to be space in barrels. We've built a bit more space this year, so I'm hoping I can start leaving wine in barrels for longer. Typically, we do about a year in barrel and then around six months in tank before bottling. The 2023 vintage is still in tanks, and we're going to bottle it at the beginning of March. That means we won't have anything to sell to professional clients—or anything to ship—until mid-to-late April.

Since we still need to pay for the 2024 fruit before selling the 2023 vintage, we decided to do a direct-to-customer presale, offering a slight discount off the normal retail price. It's about 10% of the business, maybe a little more. It doesn't cover all of the fruit bills, but it helps.

The rest of the wine goes to shops and restaurants, and we work directly with some retailers in France. Most of it, though, goes to local importers in a bunch of different markets. Starting this year, we'll be selling the 2023 vintage in the U.S. (New York and California).

Going back to the wine itself—you said you understand what your core appellations are. What are they?

There's Côte de Nuits-Villages.

Then there's Pernand-Vergelesses Blanc. Even before we started, it was a harvest cuvée in 2019—there were a few of us working harvest together that year, and I took over that piece in 2020. It didn't happen in 2021 because the fruit didn't exist, but we've made it every year since. I really like that wine. It's not an appellation many people talk about, though it's becoming more common.

We've also made Aligoté for a couple of years, including one from Ladoix. It didn't happen in 2024, but we did it in 2022 and 2023, and it should come back.

In 2023, we picked up a parcel in Gevrey with a friend. I'd love to continue, but it just didn't produce enough in 2024. In 2023, it made 12 barrels; in 2024, only two.

These seem to be the real core of the range.

We've also had a regional Chardonnay that we've been making for a number of years, but I think next year we'll switch it out for a new parcel we found in 2024. We found a lovely organic producer in the Côte Chalonnaise with some fruit we're really excited about. So there will be some Bourgogne Blanc from him, as well as some Mercurey.

What choices do you make as a winemaker?

I'm not a farmer—I know that's not how I want to spend my daily life—but I have a great deal of respect for it.

I strongly believe that the best wines come from vineyards full of life, and those are most often organically or biodynamically farmed. I don't really care about putting that on the label—I'm not looking for certification—but I'm looking for that approach to life.

To me, it's an indicator of care, thought, and attention.

In the cellar, it's been a bit of a journey. We started off using only old barrels, thinking, Oh my God, a new barrel is something to be avoided or hidden. But over time—almost by accident—2022 was a bigger year for us, and we just couldn't find enough old barrels. So we ended up using some new oak, and I actually really liked what it did. We found some new oak that worked for us—it's about getting the right character. It's not like American oak, super vanilla, or buttery. It's much more flint, smoke—just the right amount of complexity.

We're also experimenting more with larger-format barrels. That's fun—I like what it does. It gives a bit less oak influence but still provides the micro-oxygenation I want.

I've done one cuvée entirely in stainless steel, which was really cool—pure—but it lacked some complexity. I'd like to experiment with Clayver vessels, which Charles Lachaux works with. They look pretty cool—more engineered and uniform compared to a traditional terracotta amphora. But right now, logistics and space constraints are holding that back.

Are there any dream appellations you'd love to add to your portfolio?

I love Chassagne—it's just my favorite thing in the world. But fruit prices are bananas.

We make Gevrey-Villages from the lower part of the town, but I'd love to find something from the upper part.

Adrien Lattard

Adrien began his career in the Côte de Nuits at Domaine David Duband before moving to Puligny-Montrachet with Étienne Sauzet, where he refined his winemaking expertise. He then spent three years in Chassagne-Montrachet as cellar master at Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey. Following this, he became cellar master at Genot-Boulanger for the 2022 harvest. His first vintage under his négoce label, Adrien Lattard, was also in 2022.

Photo: archive of Adrien Lattard

How did you come up with the idea of starting your own business?

I'm originally from Burgundy, so I wanted to understand what actually happens between picking the fruit and drinking the wine. I had the opportunity to go to a wine school, but it was more focused on the business side. So I did that for a year, and then I wanted to improve my winemaking skills so I could sell the wine better—so I'd actually know what I was talking about. I went to Bordeaux and worked at a winery for three months during harvest. After that, I spent a lot of time working around the world, always doing three-to-four-month stints in wineries, switching between Burgundy, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Oregon, and California. One day, I just decided to do this on my own instead of following what I was being told to do.

How did you choose your first range of wines, and where did the fruit come from?

It's pretty hard to find good sources. And I'm a very sensitive person, so I wanted to work with someone who could understand me. I wouldn't say I have the best of the best today, but I'm super happy to work with this guy because we've known each other for quite some time. It wasn't possible to start working together in 2020, but in 2022, he agreed to begin. Today, I have four appellations: Bourgogne Côte d'Or Chardonnay, Aligoté, Meursault, and Puligny. I'm only working with that one person.
I definitely love both whites and reds, but when you're just starting out and want to do things well, it's easier with whites. The cost of equipment is much higher for reds. Right now, I'm in a shared winery called Wine Studio, so we have all the necessary equipment, but beyond that, you also need good people to help with sorting and everything else. I was a bit stressed at the beginning, so I really wanted to focus on quality and do everything myself. Now, little by little, I'm starting to look into making reds.

Is it really important for you that the fruit comes from organically farmed vineyards?

I think in life, we all want to move in a certain direction. I'd really love to work with biodynamic vineyards, but today, unfortunately, I haven't found the right person. So for now, it's more conventional farming. Everything isn't perfect yet, but this is what allowed me to take my first step into winemaking. I wouldn't be here without this guy, so I'm always very thankful to him for that. Hopefully, in the future, I'll be able to find exactly what I want to do.

Speaking about winemaking choices in the cellar, what do you prefer?

I'd say I fall somewhere between the old and new styles. I'm really happy to use all the techniques I've learned around the world. I want to try new things, but I also want to establish my micro-négoce properly. That's why I started with barrels and do long élevage—almost two years. I use one-third new oak barrels. When you're working with small quantities, buying concrete tanks or other equipment means you need the right scale, which isn't easy.
For the first two years, I only used 228L barrels, but this year, I added some 350L ones. I learned from my experience working at Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey that bigger barrels definitely help the wine. In Burgundy, because we're such a small region, you don't have as much room to experiment. When I worked in Bordeaux or Australia, you could try a lot of things. But if you're working with just one barrel of Meursault, obviously, you don't want to mess it up. The more I increase my production, the more

I'll integrate new things and experiment.

What is your production level right now?

I produce 3,000 bottles. In five to ten years, I see myself producing something around—or slightly under—100 barrels. That would be my ideal goal. I don't want to go too big. I want to keep control over everything.

What are the main obstacles micro-négociants face, aside from the cost of establishing a new cuverie, which you're currently looking for?

Honestly, everything. It's a combination of many things. Another challenge is that after producing the wine, you have to sell it.

What is your distribution and allocation strategy?

I used to work at a wine shop in Beaune, so they were the first place I went to try and sell my wines. But they didn't take them because, for them, my wines were too expensive. It's a very old shop with amazing allocations because they've been around since the '70s or '80s. They're very famous, but they don't work with micro-négociants. So I knocked on the door next to them, and the guy said, "Yeah, I'm super happy to work with you." Today, a good percentage of my production is distributed in France. I'd say about 60% goes to professionals in countries like the USA, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, Singapore, and Japan. The rest goes to private clients.

Do private clients buy directly from you?

Yes. It's great because, with professionals, you can sell larger amounts, but the price is lower. They help me get cash flow quickly. Then private clients allow me to have better margins and keep a direct connection with people. This is why I got into the wine industry—not just to make wine but also to meet people, exchange ideas, and share experiences.

Speaking about the 2024 vintage, which was really small and disastrous for many—how was yours?

I was supposed to make 24 barrels, but I ended up with 17. Honestly, that's still great because, being in a shared winery, we pay based on what we produce. Most people here made even less. Sometimes it's frustrating, but it's the weather—we can't fight it. In the future, I hope to produce more, but if a grower promises three barrels and only gives you one, you just take what you can and do your best.