

To Family

At Maison Louis Latour, world-class Burgundy wines are a 200-year-old family tradition.

By Jeremy Freed



Éléonore Latour spent her childhood running through vineyards and playing in the cellars of Maison Louis Latour, her family's winery in the heart of France's Burgundy region. Two decades later at age 27, she's now vice president at one of the world's most renowned winemakers, and the first woman in 12 generations of Latours to work in the family business. "I am really glad to be following in the footsteps of my ancestors," she says. "Burgundy is different from what it used to be and women are taking more leadership roles across the industry. For instance, at Louis Latour, two of our winemakers are women."

As one of the most celebrated wine regions in France, Burgundy is famous for its red and white wines made predominantly from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. The terroirs of Burgundy—the combination of soil makeup, sun exposure, and other factors that make each of the region's vineyards unique—are so vital to the character of these wines, and to French culture as a whole, that they were granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 2015.

Maison Louis Latour, founded in 1797 in the Côte de Beaune, is one of the most well-known names in the region and one of its biggest producers of grands crus—a designation reserved for the highest quality French wines. "It really is a privilege to be able to tell so many people the story of my ancestors, how they first started in Aloxe-Corton, and how that led us to today," Latour says. "It is also a beautiful legacy to protect, and we are glad to uphold the family's story and ensure continuity."

Latour is among a new generation of wine industry leaders working to ensure the future of their centuries-old craft while maintaining a healthy respect for the ways of the past. "Above all else, quality matters to us, and that starts with our growing practices," she explains.

A long-time leader in sustainable agriculture in Burgundy, Louis Latour doesn't use pesticides or other chemicals and relies on a mix of modern and antique techniques to take care of the soil and vines. "For example, we still use horse-drawn ploughs but have also implemented a lightweight vine-straddle robot that has less of an impact than on the soil," Latour says.

As the culture of wine changes around the world, Latour is intent on helping her family business adapt to changing tastes and drinking habits while spreading the gospel of Grand Cru Burgundy far and wide. "While people may be drinking less, they are drinking better," she says. Fortunately for Latour, this shift plays into the strengths of Burgundy, which has always been less focused on volume than other French winemaking regions. "Quality is the most important thing to us, and the broad range of wines at Louis Latour allows us to offer a taste of Burgundy to every person and every budget," she says.

Latour is also enthusiastic about the role technology can play in the future of wineries like Maison Louis Latour, ensuring high quality as well as sustainability. "Overall, the industry is more conscious of its impact and using modern technology to monitor, measure, and improve that impact," she says. "The terroir is essential, of course, to produce great wines, but more wineries are making changes to improve their winemaking practices with a focus on sustainable growing."

Thanks to new technologies, winemakers like Latour are better equipped to guarantee consistent quality during challenging vintages and in the face of meteorological events such as hail, frost, or heat waves.

For wine lovers, this translates to not just better-quality wines, but the satisfaction of knowing that they are drinking a wine created by a producer who considered its impact on the planet, and who cares about setting an example. For Éléonore Latour, that's just one aspect of the job among many that makes her feel fortunate to lead her family's winery into the future. "It makes you very aware of the luck you have to grow up in such a special environment and to be a part of this beautiful family story," she says. "I've always felt like we had a duty to protect this heritage."