

SCOTTISH FIELD

LOUIS LATOUR LOOKS BEYOND BURGUNDY FOR PROMISING PINOT

By Peter Ranscombe

With the price of making wine in Burgundy continuing to rise, Peter Ranscombe finds out why one producer is turning to other regions.

FEW names are as synonymous with Burgundy as Louis Latour – the wine producer traces its roots in the prestigious French region back to 1768, when Jean Latour planted vines at Aloxe, continuing a family tradition that stretched back to the 16th century.

The business shifted to the village of Beaune in 1797 and it was Jean's son, the first in a long line of "Louis" Latours, who began growing the family firm.

That growth continued for two centuries, building up the largest holding of grand cru vineyards in the Côte d'Or area.

During the 1970s, when chardonnay prices were fluctuating, Latour spread its wings to the nearby Ardèche region, where its white wines proved to be an "instant success", according to brand ambassador Florian Migeon.

That success triggered a search for a red wine site outside Burgundy, which led the producer to the Var area of Provence in the late 1980s, and in 2010 to Terres Dorées in Beaujolais.

As the price of producing pinot noir in Burgundy has continued to climb – with emerging markets such as China in particular developing a taste for the red wine and driving demand – it's harder and harder to find entry-level bottles below £20.

Latour's purchases in Var and Terres Dorées seem even more astute now.

During an online tasting this afternoon, the firm lifted the lid on its latest wines from the two regions.

I've previously raved about the **2016 Louis Latour Domaine de Valmoissine Pinot Noir** from Var, which was one of the highlights for me at last autumn's Majestic Wine press tasting and turned up alongside tatties in the Wine to Dine column back in the February issue of *Scottish Field* magazine.



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Tasting it again this afternoon, it still impressed me with its mix of woodsmoke, raspberry and a touch of fruits-of-the-forest on the nose.

The palate is more savoury, with crisp acidity and well-balanced tannins; altogether, a very tasty package, particularly now it's come down in price.

After much experimentation, this year a “grand cru” version of the wine has been released in the form of the **2017 Louis Latour Bellevue Domaine de Valmoissine Pinot Noir**.

It's a selection of grapes from three specific plots and has a richer texture, with more concentrated raspberry and red cherry flavours, plus a twist of darker blackcurrant.

The acidity is even more drying and there's added complexity, with more spun sugar notes on the finish.

In contrast, for me the **2018 Louis Latour Les Pierres Dorées Pinot** from Beaujolais was both tangier and yet more savoury.

There's less woodsmoke and more sweet hickory notes instead, and then tarter cranberry, redcurrant and raspberry flavours, with more assertive tannins than I'd expect in Burgundy proper.

The wine is labeled as “Côteaux Bourguignons”, a designation introduced in 2011 to allow pinot noir to be grown in gamay's traditional Beaujolais stronghold.

Yet the Pierres Dorées' moniker hints at an important distinction; it's named after the “garden stones” found in the area, a form of yellow limestone, with the pinot noir being grown on a mix of limestone and clay, unlike the traditional granite sites used for gamay.

While most of the vines producing grapes for the wine are still young – having only been planted from 2013 onward – there's is one older 50-year-old block, dubbed “Crazy Stone Clos” because almost every lump of rock in the vineyard contains fossils.

Both the savouriness of Les Pierres Dorées and the richness of Bellevue Domaine de Valmoissine have enough Burgundian characteristics to satisfy die-hard Burgundy fans, yet each also has an identity of its own, elevating each of them above mere copycat status.