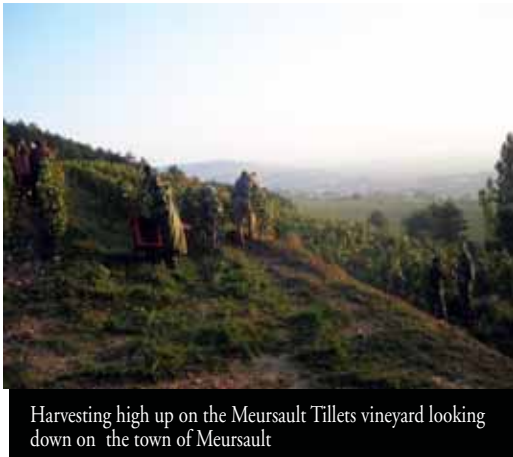




## Winery Profile:

# Ch. de la Tour and Domaine Pierre Labet

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



Harvesting high up on the Meursault Tillets vineyard looking down on the town of Meursault

### Labet. François Labet.

If the name is familiar – and if you are a Burgundy drinker it should be, it could be from any or all of three sources. He owns and manages two Burgundy domains - Ch. de

la Tour in the Clos Vougeot and Domine Pierre Labet in Beaune – as well as an eponymous négociant firm. I know him for these reasons and because François Labet is a long time friend of Spec's owners John and Lindy Rydman.

Spec's customers for lower-priced varietal wines from the south of France and French table wines are certainly familiar with Francois Labet's name as we sell thousands of cases a year of wines under his négociant label. Labet is also responsible for some good Macon Villages, Cotes du Rhone, and Bourgogne Aligote. He also makes a very good, if decidedly non-Burgundian tasting Pinot Noir from grapes grown at high elevations.

Spec's Burgundy loving customers should note the other side of the coin: Labet's family built the Ch. de la Tour (one of only two major structures inside the famous walled grand cru vineyard of Clos Vougeot) in 1891 and have been land owners and vigneron in Burgundy since 1490. His mother's side of the family has long been based in Nuits St. Georges in the Cote de Nuits and his father's side is based in Beaune in the Cote de Beaune.

Only two wines, Clos Vougeot and Clos Vougeot Vieilles Vignes, are sold under the Ch. de la Tour label. The rest of Labet's Cote d'Or Burgundies are made and cellared at the Ch. de la Tour but the are sold under the Domaine Pierre Labet (François's father) label. The Domaine Pierre Labet vineyards have long been centered on the town of Beaune with appellations including Bourgogne Rouge and Blanc, Savigny Vergelesses, Beaune Clos de Dessus des Marconnets (red and white), and Beaune Coucherais 1er cru. Over the last few years, François has made two new additions – Meursault Tillets with the 2007 vintage and Gevrey Chambertin with the 2008 vintage. Talking with Labet about his winemaking gets you a no-big-deal attitude but he is doing everything right. Labet says he began farming organically with no chemicals in 1990. He uses only natural indigenous yeast in all his fermentations. Labet's white wines are all fermented and aged in a mix of new and used 350-liter barrels (as opposed to the standard Burgundian 225-liter barrel). The larger casks give him a more favorable wine to wood ratio which allows the fruit in the white wines to shine through.

For his red wines, Labet uses only whole clusters which go into the fermenters for an eight-to-ten day cold soak before an open-topped fermentation starts. He says that the key to using whole clusters is meticulous sorting to make sure that only the best material makes it into the fermentation tank. After fermentation, the reds go from tanks into standard 225 liter barrels for malo-lactic fermentation and cellaring.

Here are my notes on some of his current releases. As were finishing up the 2007 vintage and have just received the 2008s, we will have both in stock for a time.

### PIERRE LABET, Bourgogne Blanc, 2008 12x750ml \$19.99 \$223.94

Tech: 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 14 months in French oak barrels (15% new). Straw colored, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. This is a lemony, juicy, fresh basic Bourgogne. Alive in the mouth. *Elegant and delicious. Fine. BS: 89+.*

### PIERRE LABET Vieilles Vignes, Bourgogne Blanc, 2007 12x750ml \$19.99 \$223.94

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 14 months in 350-liter French oak barrels (30% new). Yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Fresh citrus and tree fruit with a hint of tropical accented with peach and lime, mushroomy, limestone earth, supple oak, and a hint of floral. *Long finish. Satisfying, alive-in-the-mouth. Really Fine. BS: 90.*

### PIERRE LABET, Beaune Blanc Dessus des Marconnets, 2008 12x750ml \$27.95 \$314.76

Tech: 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 12 months in French oak barrels (25% new). Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity. Offers notes of mineral, lemon, and spice. Lots of class and a little oak; precise and refreshing, elegant. *Really Fine. BS: 90+.*

### PIERRE LABET, Savigny les Vergelesses Blanc 1er cru, 2008 12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31

Tech: 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 12 months in 350-liter French oak barrels (50% new). Alcoholic fermentation took 1 year and malo took another month after that to complete. Yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well-formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. Supple, rich, focused. Alive with lemony fruit and green pear with hints of stone fruits. Alive in the mouth. *Delicious and complete. Excellent. BS: 91+.*

## Ch. de la Tour and Domaine Pierre Labet continued from page 1

**PIERRE LABET, Savigny les Vergelesses Blanc 1er cru, 2007****12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31**

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented in 350-liter French oak barrels (50% new). Straw colored, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Sweet fresh tree, citrus, and tropical fruit with limestone mineral earth, integrated oak, and a sweet floral note. Very long finish. Ripe, rich, delicious and vivid. Sweet in the mouth, with vibrant balance. *Yum.*

**Excellent. BS: 92.****PIERRE LABET, Meursault Tillets, 2008****12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31**

Tech: 100% Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 12 months in French oak 350-liter casks (30% new). Straw in color, bright and clear with well-formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Rich and generous with lovely ripe fruit and fine precision. Despite the richness, it is in thrilling balance. Focused and alive, lemony fresh fruit with notes of apple and peach. Great mineral and full integrated oak. *Quite elegant, excellent.* **BS: 92.**

**PIERRE LABET, Meursault Tillets, 2007****12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31**

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Organically grown Chardonnay barrel-fermented and aged 14 months in 350-liter French oak barrels (50% new). Yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Bright and fresh with lemony citrus and hints of tree and tropical fruit with limestone minerality and subtle mushroomy earthand well integrated oak. Very long finish. Rich but alive-in-the-mouth. *Excellent.* **BS: 91.**

**PIERRE LABET, Bourgogne Rouge Vieilles Vignes, 2008****12x750ml \$19.99 \$223.94**

Tech: 100% old vine Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 14 months in French oak barrels (10% new). Medium red-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-ull-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Lots of dusty red cherry fruit accented with classic cola and black pepper notes. Hints at violets and other dark floral. Long, satisfying, complete. *Delicious and really fine.* **BS: 90.**

**PIERRE LABET, Beaune Dessus des Marconnets, 2008****12x750ml \$27.95 \$314.76**

Tech: 100% Pinot Noir. Fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 14 months in French oak barrels (20% new). Red-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity; slightly chewy phenolics. Dusty-juicy with lots of dark cherry and dark berry fruit with integrated accents of oak and mineral. Supple, lively. Lovely-in-the-mouth and quite elegant. *Excellent.* **BS: 91.**

**PIERRE LABET, Beaune Clos de Coucherais 1er cru, 2008****12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31**

Tech: 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops and punch-downs and aged 14 months in French oak barrels (35% new). Medium purple-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Juicy, supple and alive. Dusty with red cherry-berry fruit. Notes of cherry and raspberry with a hint of cranberry. Well structured, delicious, complete. Big but somehow still elegant. *Excellent.* **BS: 92.**



Ch. de la Tour (on the right) with the Ch. de Clos Vougeot in the background.

**PIERRE LABET, Gevrey Chambertin****Vieilles Vignes, 2008****12x750ml \$29.95 \$337.31**

Tech: % Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir grown in three distinct sites. Fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 14 months in French oak barrels (30% new). Deep red-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Juicy, dusty, rich, supple. Quite lively with supple red and some black fruit. Dark, but still minerally earthy. Notes of cola, subtle coffee, and black pepper. Refined power, robust, satisfying. *Excellent.* **BS: 92.**

**Chateau de la Tour, Clos Vougeot Grand Cru Cuvee Classique, 2008****12x750ml Coming in 2011**

Tech: 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-down and aged 16 months in French oak (50% new). Deep red-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and slightly chewy phenolics. Perfumed, dusty, bright with red fruit but also has black fruit notes. Mix of cherry and berries with perfume of red and black raspberry and kirsch. Has real dimension and great length. Alive-in-the-mouth and delicious. *Excellent.* **BS: 94.**

**Chateau de la Tour, Clos Vougeot Grand Cru Classic, 2007****12x750ml \$95.91 \$1080.14**

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 18 months in French oak barrels (40% new). Deep red in color with well-formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. The ripe red and black fruit offers cherry, strawberry, and dark raspberry with limestone mineral; dusty with French oak and accents of violet, cola, cocoa, Asian spice and black pepper. Offers a long finish. Delicious, satisfying; alive-in-the-mouth. *Excellent.* **BS: 94.**

**Chateau de la Tour, Clos Vougeot Grand Cru Vieilles Vignes, 2008****12x750ml Coming in 2011**

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir. Fermented using open tops, with punch-downs. Aged in 16 months in French oak barrels (100% new). Deep red-violet in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Very rich with as much black as red fruit. Perfumed and even though big, somehow ethereal. Elegant, juicy, supple. Very well integrated but on a big and even a bit chewy model. Lovely on the nose and in the mouth. *Really Excellent.* **BS: 95+.**

**Chateau de la Tour, Clos Vougeot Grand Cru Vieilles Vignes, 2007****12x750ml \$132.93 \$1496.94**

Tech: 100% Pinot Noir from vines planted in 1910 fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 18 months in French oak barrels (100% new). Deep red in color with well-formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and medium plus phenolics. Dark, sweet, and ripe offering red and black fruit with rich earth limestone mineral; dusty with new French oak and accents of cola, violet, cocoa, dark spice, sweet spice, and black pepper. Long, chewy finish. Delicious, succulent, and complete; alive-in-the-mouth. *Outstanding.* **BS: 96.** 🌟



François Labet at home in the cellars of Ch. de la Tour in the Clos de Vougeot.