

Excerpt from "The wines of Beaujolais" by Natasha Hughes MW

"It's a beautiful, clear late spring day when I drive up to meet Sebastien Dupré and Guillaume Goujon, and from the winery you can see the Alps in the distance, while the vine-covered slopes of the Côte de Brouilly spread out in the foreground. Dupré and Goujon, both too busy to spend much time admiring the view, met at agricultural school, and cemented their friendship by working together at a property in the Terrasses du Larzac, an appellation in the Languedoc. Goujon said that insights they gained in the south have helped them understand how best to manage their vineyards in an era of increasingly hot, dry summers.

Dupre returned to Beaujolais first, taking up the reins at the family domaine in 2015, and was joined three years later by Goujon. They began the process of conversion to organic farming, achieving certification in 2021, and are now well on the way to becoming fully biodynamic.

Restructuring the vineyards was also a priority, reducing the planting density from the traditional 10,000 plants per hectare down to around 6,500. They raised the trunks of their vines in order to allow them to extend the canopy onto a wire, and are currently in the process of identifying the best of their old vines to enable a massal selection for the next round of replanting. But the biggest task has been to introduce agroforestry to their landholdings, with the aim of improving both biodiversity and the vitality of their soils, likening the importance of a healthy subsoil microfaunal population to that of a healthy gut biome in humans.

Together they farm 10 hectares of vineyards in the Côte de Brouilly, with a further 4.5 hectares of Chardonnay planted in Blacé. They also recently planted just under a hectare of Aligoté in Blacé as well. Aligoté, like Gamay, they say, is a bit of an underdog - both can produce copiously and then be used to make dilute, forgettable wines, but when planted in the right spot and managed appropriately they can create wines of character and structure.

There's no lack of structure in the red wines they make from their Côte de Brouilly vineyards, a cru whose diorite soils tend to create dense, concentrated wines with bold tannins. They temper these by maturing their wines in large old oak barrels for a minimum of two years prior to release, even though they're careful not to extract too much from the wines during fermentation. The first wine they ever made together, a cuvée called 631, is still part of the

range. A blend of all three of their parcels on the Mont Brouilly, and the only one of their Côte de Brouillys to be aged for a year in old barrels and a year in cement tanks, it's a tangy wine, with focused, slightly fuzzy tannins, and a palate full of salty red liquorice flavours. Le Pavé comes from east-facing slopes, and is the most delicate and precise of their parcel selections, with a lovely kick of freshness on the long finish. The Brulhié, as is often the case with this lieu-dit, shows great concentration of fruit, but its density is leavened by a floral note. The tannins are pretty firm, even in lighter years like 2021, but well integrated into the body of the wine, helping to channel the long finish. L'Héronde has the plushest texture of the three, along with great aromatic complexity, and deep-pile tannins. The Chardonnay bottling, a Beaujolais Villages known as Le Clos des Muriers, is an opulent wine with a lot of mid-palate texture. Although the acidity isn't very high, the wine is refreshing and balanced thanks to a little twist of bitterness on the finish and some stony minerality.