# THE FRENCH

# CONNECTION

## Oregon is the next frontier for these expats.

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To some degree, the diversity and excellence of Oregon wines makes comparisons to Old World styles irrelevant. But those factors should not undercut the influence French-born and trained winemakers have had on the state's success.

Along with the pioneering Drouhin family, which enters its fourth decade making Oregon wine, a number of more recent arrivals have put their winemaking expertise to work in the state, which remains one of America's leading producers of Pinot Noir.

These French winemakers praise Oregon's welcoming winemaking community and open horizons. Moreover, they seem to have a lot of fun as they revel in the palpable sense of freedom that the state's wineries enjoy.

Perhaps it's simply the break from the constraints of tradition, but the biggest reward to leave home, and sometimes family, is the boundless opportunity to test and learn in what many call the Burgundy of the Pacific Northwest.

Meet the pioneers who looked beyond France and into the brave New World of making wine in Oregon.

# Véronique Boss-Drouhin

## Domaine Drouhin Oregon, Caballus Cellars

When Robert Drouhin purchased vineyard land in the Dundee Hills in 1987, it was the first time that any Burgundy house ventured to make wine outside of France. It fell to Robert's daughter, Véronique Boss-Drouhin, who was appointed winemaker, and her brother, Philippe, who would manage the estate's viticulture, to make it succeed.

Armed with an advanced degree in oenology from the University of Dijon, Boss-Drouhin worked the 1986 harvest at Adelsheim Vineyard, Bethel Heights Vineyard and The Eyrie Vineyard. She credits that experience, as well as mentorship from her father and Burgundian legend Henri Jayer, for the company's development. And she offers special praise for the late Stephen Cary, who was winemaker at Yamhill Valley Vineyards.

"Stephen was the first person I met when I arrived in Oregon," says Boss-Drouhin. "He taught me a lot about the wines and the few producers at that time, and he was an extraordinary storyteller and fly-fishing teacher."

Boss-Drouhin faced a steep learning curve. "We had no experience outside of Burgundy, so we did our best to farm and vinify the way we know how to," she says.

The Drouhins planted high-density rows, brought in tractors that could navigate the narrow lanes and imported tanks, barrels and much of the equipment required to manage and vinify grapes.

"As you can imagine, in the early days, there were many technical challenges," she says.

It took years to understand the wild fluctuations in the Willamette Valley's growing seasons. And yet, "you can consistently produce truly excellent wines in most vintages—a good combination of complexity and fruit, and a surprising ability to age."

Experimentation and growth continue with the recent development of the Roserock Vineyard and brand, Roserock Drouhin Oregon, which Boss-Drouhin calls "the second chapter of our adventure in Oregon." Purchased in 2013, the vineyard has approximately 35 parcels planted to a variety of clones and rootstocks.

A more private project of Boss-Drouhin's is Caballus Cellars, a 220-case Pinot Noir produced with her best friend, Isabelle Dutartre. She calls it, "a quiet adventure, the dream of two longtime best friends to make wine together.

"Maybe best of all, the story is still quite young, and there is much to discover."

# Jacques Lardière and Guillaume Large
## Résonance

It's not only the young and the restless who become enchanted by Oregon's appeal. In 2012, Lardière retired after 42 years as technical director at Maison Louis Jadot. The following year, he was tapped to start the winery's undertaking in Oregon.

Named Résonance after the Yamhill-Carlton vineyard whose purchase initiated the program, it's the first Jadot project outside of Burgundy.

Why Oregon? "In Burgundy, there is less possibility to develop our business," says Lardière. "We still have a little in Chablis and Beaujolais, but in Burgundy, it's too expensive.

"For me, this is a good opportunity. And we were ready to take the risk of ungrafted vines."

Guillaume Large (right), winemaker at Résonance since August 2017, also has French roots. He was born in the heart of the Pouilly-Fuissé appellation, in Burgundy's Mâconnais region. His grandfather, a vineyard owner, first inspired his passion for vines and wines.

Large earned an Oenologist's National Diploma at the Jules Guyot Institute of Dijon, and worked stints at Maison Joseph Drouhin and Château de Vinzelles. He then served as assistant technical director at Maison Louis Jadot, where he worked under Lardière.

He considers Résonance the beginning of "a great adventure—move to Oregon, use my knowledge and experiences to carry on Jacques's work, and reveal the best of a vineyard block's terroir with minimal intervention.

"At Résonance Vineyard [planted in 1981], we have the chance to have top-quality, ungrafted Pinot Noir growing on an old sedimentary soil," says Large. "I am amazed by the purity of this Pinot [compared to Burgundy], where all Pinots are grafted."

The first releases from Résonance, though made in borrowed quarters, reveal a European sensitivity to express place, dynamic tension and subtlety. With the new winery ready for this year's crush, it's easy to imagine that the best is yet to come.

# Thomas Savre
## Lingua Franca

For a young man barely six years out of grad school, Savre's résumé is extraordinary. He pursued a bachelor's degree in wine science, and dual master's degrees in viticulture practices and enology and winemaking (both from the University of Burgundy). At the same time, Savre was working at Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Domaine de Bellène, Domaine Dujac and Maison Nicolas Potel.

He then interned for E. & J. Gallo, "a fantastic experience," which led him to seek "a smaller-scale estate focusing on sense of place, organic farming and detailed winemaking."

Why Oregon? Therein lies a story about a life-changing bottle of wine.

"One Saturday morning, during the 2012 harvest at Romanée-Conti, I was the lucky one elected to choose two bottles of wine from the cellar to drink at the *casse-croûte* [snack]," says Savre. "I picked Beaucastel 2006 Reserve Vieilles Vignes white and Cristom 1995 Marjorie Vineyard. This last wine was one of the best wines I ever have had."

With Oregon freshly planted in his mind, he jumped at the opportunity to join Evening Land as Dominique Lafon's assistant winemaker, enologist and viticulturist in the Eola-Amity Hills in 2013. Two years later, he was recruited by Lafon and Larry Stone to become winemaker at Lingua Franca.

The winery's first releases, 2015 and 2016 Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, have scored in the 90s. And the estate vineyard, which is just now beginning to bear fruit, has provided what Savre calls his biggest challenge.

"I can't treat this vineyard the same as an old one," he says. "It is very delicate, but also very dynamic at the same time. It takes a lot of effort to understand its behavior, and the vintage effect every year is something new.

"And yet, this opportunity allowed me to bring ideas to the table, and help shape a vision based on what I think should be done in the vineyard and at the winery... to respect the vision of Larry Stone and use the experience and knowledge of Dominique Lafon to achieve this vision."

# Anne Sery and Laurent Montalieu

## NW Wine Company

For Sery, summer vacations meant travel from her birthplace and home on Réunion Island to Burgundy. There, her Pinot-loving parents had purchased some small vineyards in the Côte de Nuits region, where she eagerly lent a hand from age 11. She began to do more vineyard work for Domaine Hubert Lignier in Morey-St-Denis when she was 14, pulling leaves and dropping fruit.

"That's when I realized that I wanted to be a *vigneron*," she says, and then jokes. "At that point, I had never seen Burgundy in the winter yet."

Sery's education continued with undergraduate studies in Dijon, followed by a master's degree in viticulture and oenology from the National School of Agricultural Engineering of Bordeaux and a diploma in enology from the University of Bordeaux. Looking to work abroad, she interned at Beaux Frères, where she met Montalieu, who later brought her to Soléna Estate.

Montalieu was also schooled in Bordeaux, but after an internship at Mumm Napa, had decided to remain in America. Oregon's Bridgeview Vineyard and Winery recruited him as its winemaker in 1988.

"True to the Oregonian spirit, it was in the middle of nowhere, and in all aspects from the vineyard to the winery, you had to make things work," says Montalieu. "Not only did I have to grow and make wines from the untamed ground of Southern Oregon, I had to do it without all the winemaking bells and whistles. It was an experience that challenged me in new ways."

He ventured from Bridgeview to WillaKenzie Estate and then started Soléna Estate with his wife, Danielle Andrus Montalieu. The two went on to launch NW Wine Company in 2003, a custom-crush facility for a slew of brands, with John Niemeyer of Oregon Wine Services.

Montalieu's current focus is on Soléna Estate, Hyland Estates and Westmount Wine Company, projects that target different aspects of the national Oregon Pinot Noir market.

Vibrant acidity, Montalieu believes, is the core strength of Willamette Valley wines. "It really drives their style and ageworthiness," he says. "You combine that with Pinot Noir, which has the amazing capability to reflect the ground that it is grown in, and you have Oregon in its current state."

"It took me a little while to understand that Pinot Noir didn't have to express itself in just one way," says Sery. "Now when I taste, I have a certain expectancy when tasting Oregon Pinots, and another when tasting Burgundy."

## Isabelle Dutartre
### De Ponte Cellars, Caballus Cellars, 1789 Wines

Born in Paris but raised in the Côte Chalonnaise, Dutartre earned her enology diploma in 1981 from the University of Burgundy in Dijon. Shortly thereafter, she signed on for harvest work at Maison Joseph Drouhin. That's when she met Véronique Boss-Drouhin, and their lifelong friendship began.

Before long, Dutartre was promoted to assistant winemaker at the Drouhin winery in Beaune. There, she was mentored by Laurence Jobard, one of the first female winemakers in the region.

Dutartre also visited Boss-Drouhin in Oregon to help with racking, bottling and harvest. And in 2001, she was hired at nearby De Ponte Cellars, where she remains full-time winemaker.

With experience on both sides of the Atlantic, Dutartre now sees the undertaking in Oregon as "quite the opposite of making wine in Burgundy."

"In Oregon, we are trying to achieve finesse and elegance, while knowing that the fruit and body will be present," she says. "Conversely, in Burgundy, the finesse is part of the terroir, so the goal is to attain more roundness and concentration."

In warm, ripe years, Dutartre uses vineyard management techniques like higher crop yields, control of vigor and leaf pulling, as well as "conservative picking dates, to maintain good acidity and freshness."

Dutartre feels that there are fewer challenges to winemaking in Oregon than Burgundy, and she points to less disease pressure and drier weather as contributing factors. Though harvests in the Dundee Hills often involve intermittent rains, the hail and humidity that impact grapes in France are far less likely.

Two side projects, both limited editions of a single Pinot Noir, are of particular importance to her. Dutartre's 1789 wines commemorate the French Revolution and reflect the metamorphosis she experienced upon moving, with her three young children and dog, from France to Oregon.

Caballus Cellars is her joint venture with Boss-Drouhin.

# Bruno Corneaux
## Domaine Divio

"I never thought I would end up working in America one day, when I worked our family vineyard in Burgundy," says Corneaux over a glass of his excellent Chardonnay.

Corneaux met many foreign students as he was studying for a master's degree in enology and viticulture at the University of Burgundy, Dijon, and became increasingly intrigued about other ways of winemaking around the world.

Then fate, in the form of Boss-Drouhin, made him a life-changing offer.

"She approached me after we graduated, and she said 'Why don't you come and help us for harvest? We have this property in Oregon you might be interested in,'" says Corneaux. "That was 1996. So I came over and discovered America."

As so many others had, he found the area's winemaking community to be quite special. "Everybody was so open, working together, creating a synergy to enhance the awareness of Oregon wine around the world," he says. "It was a movement that I loved right away. It would have taken me 10 years in Burgundy to create this relationship. Here, it was a few months."

Though his internship at Domaine Drouhin created a fondness for the state, Corneaux chose to further his winemaking skills elsewhere after its completion. He worked at vineyards across the globe before settling in to produce wine from Eastern Washington for seven years. He would inevitably return to the Willamette Valley in 2010, joining Montalieu at Soléna Estate as winemaker and vineyard manager.

"We share a philosophy that the winemaker should be growing grapes as well to understand the complete process," says Corneaux. "For us, it's fundamental."

And making Pinot Noir, he says, "was a no-brainer. It was resembling some parts of Burgundy that I love—Beaujolais—hilly with forests on top of the hills.

"I had to find a place to start my own winery," says Corneaux. "For me, Ribbon Ridge was the most attractive—sedimentary and marine soil, and the clay content is higher than elsewhere, really, the closest to what I worked with in Burgundy in the Côtes de Beaune."

Corneaux founded his own label, Domaine Divio, in 2012, where he now pursues a noninterventionist style. He strives for a natural expression, yet still applies Burgundian techniques like fermentation in French oak barrels, long aging on the lees and no fining or filtration.

"I'm looking to reveal the great flavors, acidity and length that is already potentially there," he says.