



Arlequin One-Bottle Club
March 2018
Domaine Michel Lafarge Volnay 2011
Burgundy, France

Varietal: 100% Pinot Noir

Winemaker How to introduce Michel Lafarge? We can do no better than to quote the *New York Times*' Eric Asimov, who, in a 2015 profile of this legendary Burgundy wine-maker wrote, "Perhaps nobody has embodied the allure of Burgundy as well as Michel Lafarge, whose family estate in Volnay makes wines that Burgundy lovers prize for their deep, soulful beauty." The Lafarge domaine was established by Michel's great-great-grandparents early in the 19th century, and it has been worked by Lafarges ever since. These days, son Frédéric—whose first vintage was 1978—and daughter-in-law Chantal helm the estate, though Michel still has a hand in the cellar. Both Michel and Frédéric are old-school *vignerons*—meaning they are farmers first and winemakers second, and view their chief role as a caretaker of their vines.

Vintage Burgundy's 2011 vintage was uneven, with many critics concluding that, while it was not a great year, the best producers produced many pleasurable wines. Michel Lafarge is more enthusiastic. He told Allen Meadows, of *Burghound*, that 2011 was a "superb, even great, vintage of *terroir* that produced perfectly balanced wines and in both colors. The early growing season was quite precocious and dry. July, and the first half of August, however were rainy and cool and thus the season gave back about one week of its advanced state. We elected to begin picking on the 31st of August and while we had outstanding phenolic maturity, sugars were only average at around 12.5%. It was extremely clean and there was really very little sorting required. We did our normal vinification because if you have

clean and ripe fruit then there's no reason to change what you know already works well." Michel, who has vast experience with older vintages, likened 2011 wines to those of 1952. As we've never have the fortune to taste a 1952 Burgundy, we take him at his word on that.

Winemaking All Lafarge reds are completely de-stemmed and then gently crushed using a pneumatic press. Fermentation occurs spontaneously, as a result of wild yeasts—juice is never inoculated. New oak is kept to a minimum, with a maximum of 25% on any given wine. For this Volnay, no new oak was used. The matured 18 months in older (neutral) wood before being bottled unfined.

Vineyard The entire Lafarge domaine comprises just 12 hectares (30 acres). This village-level Volnay blends fruit from notable vineyards in both the northern and southern ends of the village, including Les Famines, Les Buttes and Des Cros Martin. All have clay-limestone soil, and, like all of Lafarge's vines, are farmed organically and biodynamically. Vine-by-vine handwork, horse-drawn plowing, the planting of cover-crops—all of these labor-intensive practices are standard at this meticulous domaine.

Tasting Notes Purity and elegance are the hallmarks of Lafarge wines, and this bottling is no exception. As Eric Asimov puts it, Lafarge wines are "modest in the best sense of the word, not showy but respectful and expressive of their terroirs, graceful, dignified and altogether captivating." Look for high-toned, floral-tinged aromatics redolent of red fruits, earth and spice. Those notes appear again on the finely etched, medium-bodied palate, which gracefully balances minerality, crisp raspberry notes, forest floor and fine, silky tannins.

Food Pairing Simplicity is key in pairing foods with this red. Keep the flavors on the plate mild and simple: Aggressive spices, complex preparations and bold flavors will overwhelm this Volnay's subtlety. Mild, earthy or herb-accented dishes, such as with poultry with tarragon or truffles, mushroom risotto or a rosemary-rubbed veal chop will bring out the wine's fruit and floral edge.

