ONE TO WATCH

Hombeline Guyon

A rising star, this true child of Burgundy is making her mark on a remarkable, family-owned domaine

STORY NATALIE EARL, DECANTER REGIONAL EDITOR FOR FRANCE

I'm a baby of the climats de Bourgogne,' says Hombeline Guyon, the third generation, after her father Dominique and uncle Michel, to take the reins at Domaine Antonin Guyon in Savigny-lès-Beaune, just north of Beaune.

It transpires that she was instrumental – alongside Domaine de la Romanée-Conti's Aubert de Villaine – in the successful bid to have Burgundy's climats (its many long-established and specifically defined parcels of vines) inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2015, heading up the communications and engaging local stakeholders. 'It was a truly transformative experience,' she says. 'Witnessing the collective effort to protect and recognise our land gave me a profound sense of purpose.'

But she has been deeply shaped by this land in other ways, too.

The Guyon family has 48ha of vineyard holdings in 25 appellations across the Côte d'Or – unusually extensive for a family-owned domaine in Burgundy. She reels them off fluently, from north to south.

Hombeline's grandfather Antonin built his eponymous domaine in the 1960s. Over 10 years, he amassed impressive holdings, from Gevrey-Chambertin and Chambolle-Musigny down to Corton, Volnay, Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet. When Dominique joined in the 1970s, he carried out his own remarkable feat – buying up 350 plots, from 80 different owners, to create a single, 22ha block of vines on a south-facing hillside in the Hautes-Côtes de Nuits. This was the start of an additional domaine, Domaine Dominique Guyon, an early pioneer in what was once an overlooked sub-region.

An uncertain path

As an only child raised by her father, Hombeline spent much of her youth alone with him – at the domaine, out at restaurants, listening deeply and observing intently. 'He spoke to me all the time, about everything,' she says. 'I knew everything about the domaine, everything about what he wanted to do.' She absorbed it all.

She knew that he wanted her to join the domaine eventually, but he didn't lay down a path for her, or tell her how to go about it; it was never prescriptive. 'I had to figure it out on my own, and I feel stronger for that,' she says.

She travelled to Japan, China and the US, working across different areas of the wine business, before returning to Burgundy and eventually joining the domaine in 2014. Although it was far from easy at the beginning – 'My father is very smart, elegant, charismatic, with a strong personality, but he didn't show me how to do things' – there is now a mutual recognition of each other's talents and strengths.

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> **Hombeline Guyon**

Alongside her father and long-time cellar master Vincent Nicot, who retired last year, Hombeline began to draw a more open exchange out of these two smart, sensible, but traditional men. She says that they began to take much more time for tasting – more frequently and for longer periods – and she feels that the three of them learning (or re-learning) how to taste together, and to listen to each other, made them a stronger team.

Hombeline also feels that she has brought a lightness of touch to the wines, with less extraction (fewer pumpovers and more rack and return). They've reduced the percentage of new oak and are being less formulaic in their vinification and maturation, and more reactive and precise.

Supporting creativity

Despite her entry into the domaine not being completely laid out for her, and despite being a woman in a male-dominated sphere, Hombeline feels that no one should have to fight to find their place. She says it's more about recognising each individual's talents, and that ultimately people want to feel secure and recognised. She's also conscious, as a mother of three herself now, of what it meant for her father to raise a daughter alone while running an estate.

She carries her inherited responsibilities lightly, but there might have been another path: being a journalist, drawn from her love of people and sense of justice. But running the domaine offers something equally enriching, allowing her creative side to bloom, 'which is good for the wines and the domaine, but also for me – as a woman, a mother and a daughter'.

She feels that this is a job that requires much humanity and humility. 'You have to be humble with nature; you have to think with your heart,' she says, embracing and embodying the multifaceted role of daughter, mother, woman – and child of Burgundy.





Left: Hombeline with her father Dominique. Above: the pair with Hombeline's uncle Michel (at left)

One to try



● **Domaine Antonin Guyon, Corton Grand Cru Clos du Roy, Burgundy, France 2022** 94

£92.50-£107.67 (ib) **Avint-Garde, Cru, Ideal Wine Co, Lay & Wheeler Trading**

Beautifully pure and pretty scents emerge from the glass – punnets of strawberries spiked with orange peel and spice. The wine's silky texture makes it feel fluid and free, with strands of tannin creating a lacy structure around the finish. The acidity is surprisingly powerful for such a warm year, ensuring the wine will age well into the medium term. **Drink** 2028-2040 **Alcohol** 13.5% D

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