

# The house that Jacques built



Domaine Dujac,  
Morey-Saint-Denis

What do you say when you are invited to a pig slaughter at one of Burgundy's leading domaines?  
"I'm free," says Dan Keeling  
Illustrations by Naomi Sloman



**B**y the time I arrive in sleepy Morey-Saint-Denis, the beautiful pig is already half-way through his last meal. Covered head to trotter in black wiry hair, and over 400 lbs in weight, adult Gascon pigs are such formidable eaters that they can grow at a rate of over a kilogram per day. Watch one who has been starved for a morning let loose on one final feed, and the origination of the expression “eating like a pig” becomes abundantly clear.

It’s a bright autumnal day at the estimable Domaine Dujac, where *Noble Rot* has been invited to take part in the slaughter of one of the estate’s pigs by co-owner Jeremy Seysses, a tall, engaging man just shy of 40. Having studied at both Dijon and Oxford Universities, and with French and American parentage (his wife Diana Snowden-Seysses is also from California), Jeremy’s accent hovers somewhere between Gevrey-Chambertin and the Golden Gate Bridge, somewhat apt for a well-travelled and erudite gourmand. (Later, I am impressed by the number of books with titles like *Vinegar – 1001 Practical Uses* that are liberally deposited around Dujac’s guest rooms).

A white Renault van rolls slowly onto the forecourt and two heavily-built middle-aged men, one sporting the kind of bushy handlebar moustache last considered fashionable in the late 19th century, manoeuvre themselves out. Laden down with buckets, ropes and a collection of sure looking knives, the arrival of the local butchers means

things aren’t looking too rosy for Porky, although he’s too busy enjoying a back scratch to pick up on any sense of imminent doom. In fact, the only time that the pig seems to get even remotely agitated is when Monsieur Moustache tightly fastens a rope to one of his hind legs, and the other end to a nearby metal rail, so that he can’t run away. By the time the butcher casually squares a compact bolt gun to the animal’s forehead and fires a sudden shock of cold steel deep into its brain, the beautiful black pig is so far gone he doesn’t even have time to let out a squeal; his legs give out beneath him and, to all intents, he’s dead.

The butcher cuts the pig’s main artery, and a fountain of blood gushes into a well-positioned pan, which (after continuous stirring by hand to prevent any clotting) is later transformed into reams of delicious, delicately spiced black pudding. After thirty seconds the blood pressure drops and Jeremy begins vigorously pumping the pig’s left front leg to and forth, and after the last vestiges of life seep out of its now inert body, everyone takes a moment to rest. The atmosphere lightens and the butchers begin wiping clean their tools, and it’s then when I can’t help asking a question that anyone unwittingly adverse to andouille sausage *and* taking part in a pig slaughter in rural France should never, *ever*, ask: “So,” I begin innocently, “what do you make with the intestines?”

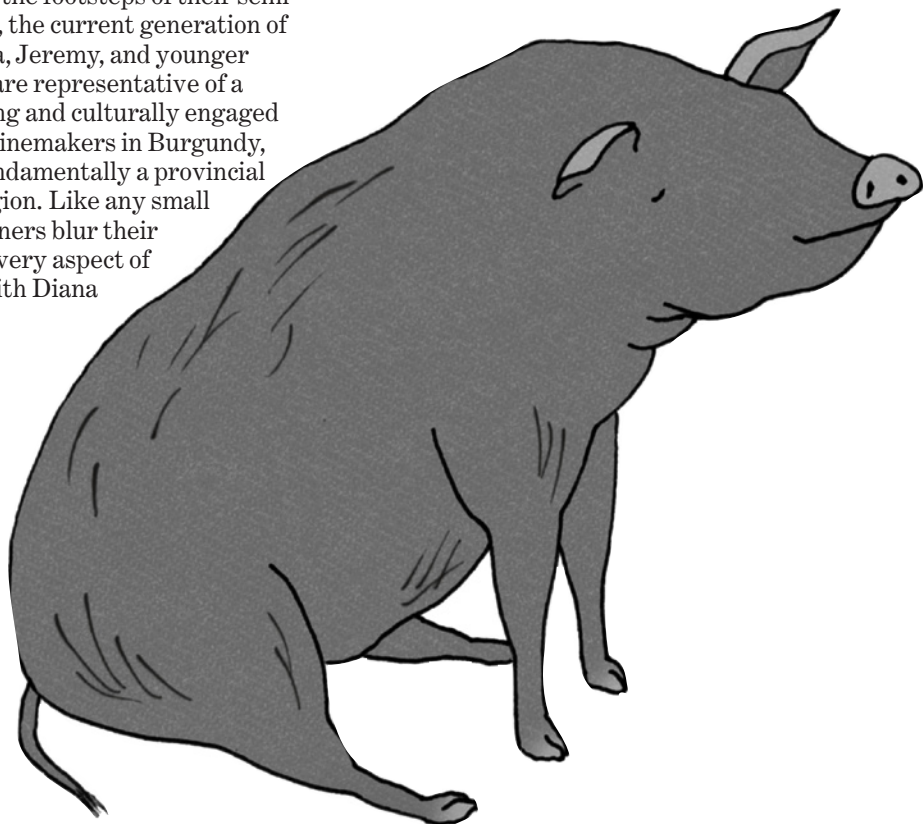
Nestled on the tiny Rue de la Bussière in Morey-Saint-Denis, Domaine Dujac makes

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some of the most compelling and feverishly sought-after wines in the Côte d'Or; a remarkable feat considering that, in Burgundy terms, the estate is a relative newcomer. Whilst it's common for wine estates to be passed down through families for generations (although somewhat divided, due to France's archaic inheritance laws), Jeremy's father Jacques was an outsider to Burgundy before buying Morey's Domaine Graillet in 1967 and changing its name. Having caught the wine bug whilst dining at many of France's best restaurants by his father Louis' side (himself a keen gourmet and successful biscuit manufacturer), Jacques dreamt of becoming a *vigneron* rather than join the family firm. With Louis' help, and early encouragement from the likes of Henri Gouges and Pierre Ramonet, he apprenticed as a winemaker under Gérard Potel at Domaine Pousse d'Or before setting up on his own, and in 1971 met his American wife Rosalind who had arrived at Dujac to help work the harvest.

Following in the footsteps of their semi-retired parents, the current generation of Seysses – Diana, Jeremy, and younger brother Alec – are representative of a forward-thinking and culturally engaged generation of winemakers in Burgundy, which is still fundamentally a provincial agricultural region. Like any small estate, the partners blur their roles through every aspect of the business, with Diana

(who trained at her family's Snowden estate in Napa, and UC Davis) taking the lead as winemaker. Similarly to Domaine de la Romanée-Conti in nearby Vosne-Romanée, Dujac is one of a number of producers who still include a high percentage of whole bunches and stems during fermentation, a once widespread technique that adds a silken viscosity and savoury complexity to their famously perfumed wines. Dujac's wines are often relatively light in colour, placing the focus on finesse and harmony rather than sheer concentration, and all originate from a portfolio of prime Côte de Nuits vineyards. Starting with the entry level village Morey-Saint-Denis (which Diana cites as one of her personal favourites, and fondly calls "Jacques' wine") up to the mineral, age-worthy Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Cru 'Aux Combottes', Dujac's roster moves through well-positioned sites in Chambolle-Musigny and Vosne-Romanée, before peaking with several famed Grand Crus including Clos Saint-Denis and Clos de la Roche.





“Clos de la Roche is in many ways the wine that most defines Morey for me” says Jeremy a few days later, whilst he cooks supper for his young sons Aubert and Blaise at home in Nuits-St-Georges. “Having grown up in Morey-Saint-Denis, I am especially drawn to the wines. They are not necessarily the most polished wines of the Côte de Nuits, but they have a warmth and character that is both unique and familiar, like an extension of the family. The Clos de la Roche has that spicy warmth that you get in the Morey village wine, but brings to it a stony minerality you’d expect from the thinner soils in the Grand Crus, and a whole other level of elegance to its tannins. It’s also got a musky, gamey character.” Jeremy places two bowls of steaming hot pasta in front of his sons, and I ask whether he thinks Dujac has such a thing as a house style. “I suppose there is”, he replies. “But when you are so close to it, you don’t see it so much. It’s certainly not a deliberate thing, as you can see it right from the start in my father’s wines. It’s a consequence of a number of consistent choices such as using a high percentage of whole clusters, a specific style of oak barrels, and our preferred level of extraction. What is interesting is that even in years like 2000, where we destemmed heavily, a number of tasters would consider the wines “very Dujac”, so really it’s not down to just one element, but more of a combination of a number of small decisions.”



The kids finish their supper, and after a few minutes pretending to be robots, make their way upstairs to bed. We adjourn to the Seysses’ candle lit dining room, where Jeremy has lined up a stellar selection of wines for blind tasting (he was a member of a highly successful wine tasting team during his three years at Oxford University), and the exotic whiff of andouille gradually begins to

impregnate the air. Now, I'm a food lover, and ordinarily will eat pretty much everything, but I now know that everything doesn't extend to andouille. A type of tripe sausage made out of pig's intestines, when Jeremy had kindly offered to cook this rustic French classic I had gratefully accepted; after all, I had reasoned, how different to a tasty Toulouse could it possibly be? The answer is "extremely", as even after hours of fastidious cleaning there's just no disguising the fetid aromas of a working digestive organ, and for the first time since childhood I find myself surreptitiously hiding part of my supper in a napkin.

Next, Jeremy serves a meltingly delicious homemade pâté and pours out glasses of two mysterious, murky reds. After a few minutes of sniffing, slurping and spirited deliberation around the table, they are identified as two Cornas; an elegant and intense Noël Verset 1996, and a deep and earthy Auguste Clape 1985. A fan of northern Rhone wines and beyond, Jeremy talks passionately about Chave Hermitage and Jamet Côte-Rôtie before singling out Egon Müller, Giuseppe Rinaldi and Bartolo Mascarello as a few producers outside of France that he particularly admires. "I love the energy and rigour of many winemakers in places like California, Australia and New Zealand," he enthuses, as talk turns to New World wines. "There's a lot of questioning and searching going on as they find their way towards making wines they love. In California, I really

admire the old guard pioneers like Paul Draper and Josh Jensen, and people like Wells Guthrie at Copain from the younger generation."

By the time we get to the main course we're all so content and benevolent that the blind tasting has gone out of the window, and as we tuck into moist loin of pork with pig fat roast potatoes our generous hosts open two mind-blowing Dujacs: Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru 'Les Gruenchers' 1993 and Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru 1978. The darkly pitched Gruenchers' silken body tingles over my palate before fanning out in a peacock's tail of flavour, whilst the Morey 1er Cru – still so fresh after 37 years – is everything you could wish for in a mature Burgundy, and then some. We finish with a Georges Mugneret Nuits-St-Georges 1er Cru 'Les Chaignots' 1978 – sour cherries, blood and spice – and ready ourselves for the journey down the windy RN74 back to our beds at the domaine. "Beyond making wines that are technically correct and show a strong sense of place, I think it's important to make wines that have, for the want of a better word, soul," Jeremy explains as we bid farewell. Having tasted their range direct from cellar, whatever that extra element is that separates the great from the good, Dujac wines have it in spades. Our taxi pulls across Nuits-St-Georges' town square and out into the cold, deserted Burgundy night, and as I rest my head against a misted car window my thoughts turn fondly back to the beautiful pig.

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