

Faugères, Adagio des Terroirs 2001 Domaine Jean- Marie Fourier

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I may have written recently on purple pages recently rather selfishly complaining about the great influx of my fellow countrymen in the Languedoc, but I am all in favour of the other wave of immigrants there, from smarter wine regions in northern France. The more sophisticated winemaking influence there is in France's biggest but perhaps most unevolved wine region, the more fine wine will be produced there, I believe.

So I am all in favour of the establishment of Domaine Jean- Marie Fourier in Faugères by this emigré from Gevrey- Chambertin. He has chosen this, one of the smallest and most distinctive of the Languedoc appellations up in the hills just east of St Chinian. It shares with the upper reaches of St Chinian a particularly high concentration of schist (like Priorat and the Douro valley) which encourages vine roots to dig deeper and deeper in search of water. Harder schist is said to suit Mourvèdre and Carignan particularly well, limiting berry size, while areas with softer schist tend to encourage softer tannins and is promoted, by Fourier at least, as especially suitable for the Grenache and Syrah that make up 80 per cent of this *cuvée* fairly equally between them. Roughly ten per cent each of Mourvèdre and Carignan add grace notes to this sophisticated Faugères.

It does have a certain Burgundian grace about its structure - certainly no rough edges or hollow corners of the palate - but the flavours are entirely Languedoc: herbs, a certain earthiness, a sort of mountain goat version of a southern Rhône. This particular bottle could happily be drunk straight away or any time over the next two to three years.

In the UK Burgundy and southern French specialists A & B Vintners of Brenchley are offering Adagio des Terroirs at £86.95 a case duty paid, delivered, including VAT (£60 a case in bond). This works out at about £7.25 a bottle (the wine can be bought at this price as part of a mixed case) - not a bad price considering the ambitious pricing that has invaded the Languedoc- Roussillon. (Mouton- Rothschild's Baron d'Arques Vin de Pays made near Limoux at almost £20 a bottle seems a mite over- ambitious, for example.)

In the US retailers of the wine are cited by WineSearcher in both New York and Santa Barbara, though at prices closer to \$20 a bottle, while Philipson Wine in Denmark apparently offer it at closer to A & B Vintners prices.

The 'Burgundian' Faugères would provide an interesting contrast with my favourite among more traditional Faugères producers, **Domaine Alquier**, whose 1999 - the current vintage - is looking extremely toothsome now: rich, mouthfilling, lovely, lively but already quite soft. If anything it costs slightly less than Fourier's version, and is available from www.everywine.co.uk in the UK; Caveau de la Tour of Meursault and JD Wines of Beaune in France (where the domaine itself can be contacted on 04 67 23 07 89); The Party Source of Bellevue, Kentucky in the US; and Maison Vauron of Auckland in New Zealand.