



TERROIR DOES THE TALKING

At the Domaine Marquis D'Angerville, a shift to biodynamic viticulture protects the soil and lends the wine a natural purity and balance

by RUMA SINGH

Here's a storyline.

An investment banker in New York comes back to his roots, in the vineyards of his forefathers after his father's passing, only to fall in love with the way of the vines and turn his back on urban chaos.

Synopsis of a Hollywood movie? Close but not quite, if you're thinking of Ridley Scott's *A Good Year*. This is, in fact, the real-life story of French aristocrat and former investment banker Guillaume D'Angerville, who has chosen to continue the family tradition of making wines in the Volnay commune in Côte du Beaune, Burgundy, since the last 15 years.

His Domaine Marquis D'Angerville wines are revered around the world for their exquisite 'purity, precision and elegance' to quote the wine critics. There is minimal intervention during the winemaking process, with Guillaume preferring to let the land and environment (terroir) speak through the wine. He was recently in Delhi with his wines, which will soon be available in India. An intimate din-

ner at Le Cirque, where vintages of three Domaine Marquis D'Angerville Premier Crus – Champans, Taillepieds, and the revered monopole (vineyard) Clos des Ducs were displayed in both horizontal and vertical flights, quickly became a masterclass on the effects of terroir and climate on Burgundy's prized Pinot Noir grape.

When the wines speak

The repast was top-and-tailed by D'Angerville's exquisite Premier Cru Meurseult, Santenats 2015 (intense and sharp, with a knife-edged acidity) and a revelatory marc de Bourgogne hors d'age (liquor distilled from the pomace left after winemaking) that was paired with dessert. We were in wine heaven. At the table, Guillaume D'Angerville, multi-lingual aristocrat, held court about his beloved Volnay. His wines, save for brief introductions, were allowed to speak for themselves.

And they did, beautifully.

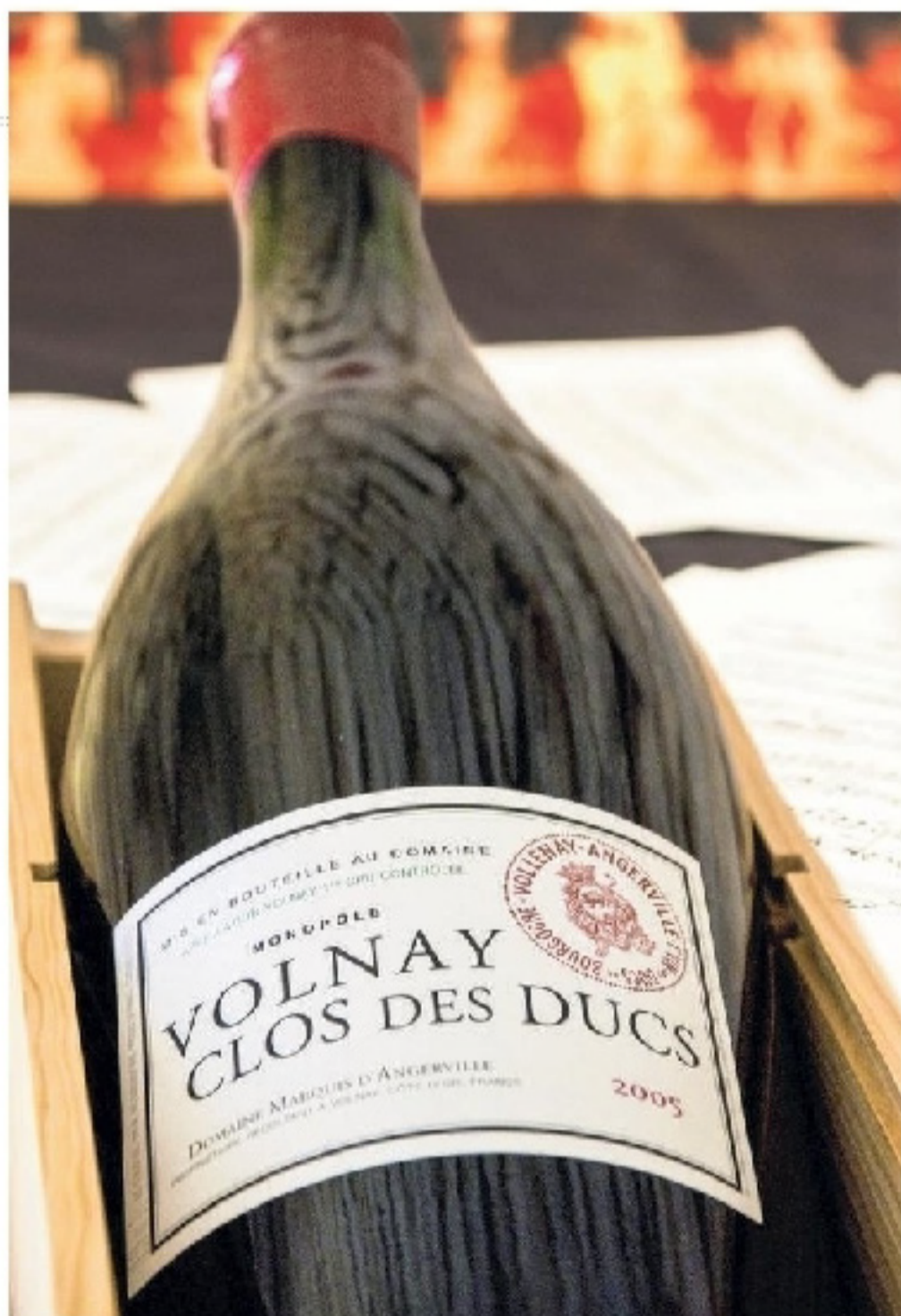
With excellent wine and convivial company comes stimulating conversation. This veered from food pair-



BURGUNDY BECKONS

The Domaine Marquis D'Angerville wines soon available for limited release in New Delhi, India:

- Volnay 1er Cru Fremiets 2015
- Volnay 1er Cru Champans 2015
- Volnay 1er Cru Caillerets 2015
- Volnay 1er Cru Clos des Ducs monopole 2015



LUXE 7

Making a mark (Clockwise from below) The Clos des Ducs, and Volnay at the back, bouchons or corks, Guillaume D'Angerville and a bottle from Clos des Ducs, Volnay



My patrimony is my sub-soil. This, I cannot preserve, if I put chemicals into it

GUILLAUME D'ANGERVILLE
Domaine Marquis D'Angerville

ings with Burgundy Pinot Noir ("Japanese cuisine goes very well," said Guillaume) to how he manages to apportion his portfolio among the 35 countries he exports to – yes, 80% of Domaine Marquis D'Angerville's production is exported. To this he explains that he picks his partners with care: they must be on the same wavelength as "the business of wine is about relationships".

Volnay, steeped in history as the summer residence of the historically-powerful dukes of Burgundy, comprises of a mere 300 hectares of precious limestone-marl-clay rich soil and no less than 110 Premier Cru vineyards. The D'Angerville holding comprises 12.5 hectares, and owning that in itself "is a privilege," says Guillaume.

Moving to biodynamic

Guillaume entered the winemaking world of Domaine Marquis D'Angerville in a way he describes as 'brutal': the sudden death of his father, Jacques, in 2003 meant he had to move back to Volnay hurriedly. Though he wasn't a stranger to viticulture, hav-

ing been present for most harvests, taking over the reins sans warning was "intimidating", he confesses. "My father was well-known, I was totally unknown. Most journalists wondered if I would be up to the task." Undeterred, the new Marquis went back to university in Dijon to do an accelerated course in oenology.

"I wanted to understand the fundamentals behind the practices that I'd learned watching my father make wine. In the end the good news was that I arrived at the domaine with a fresh eye and a willingness to respect the past, notably my father's winemaking style, yet to change things that could make even better wines."

The 'purity and precision'-driven style of his father was retained, but the one change Guillaume made was a shift to biodynamic viticulture. This, he believed, was a better way to respect terroir, so supreme a factor in the great wines of Burgundy, and in line with family thinking.

His reason for incorporating biodynamic methods was to protect the precious soil, rather than improve the already outstanding wines.

Decanter reports that in 2014, vines bruised by an unexpected hailstorm were rubbed with an unguent of valerian and arnica, as per biodynamic beliefs. So when Guillaume's first own vintage was released in 2005, it was to resounding accolades. The "beautiful terroir of Volnay" had spoken again.

Creating a classic

As we savoured the red-wine braised duck 'Berlingots' with elegantly-nuanced Pinot Noirs, the discussion turned general: what makes a wine endure as a perennial classic. "It should be pure, clean and you should never tire of it," was the consensus. Voilà! A description of Burgundy's best wines.

As we finish dinner, the Ambassador of France in India, Alexandre Ziegler tells Guillaume, "Your wines are not made; they are born." He turns to him with a smile. "And I'm happy to be the midwife."

Indicative prices for the wines per 750 ml bottle in the USA, ex-tax, range from \$125 (Fremiets) to \$280 (Clos des Ducs). Prices with taxes in India are likely to vary.