



Exclusive Interview with Guillaume d'Angerville



Domaine Marquis d'Angerville

The first in what will be a series of interviews from Summergate's Burgundy producers, Summergate was lucky enough to be given an **exclusive interview** with one of Burgundy's most esteemed producers, Guillaume D'Angerville of Domain Marquis d'Angerville.

Family member & owner of this iconic vineyard, as well as one of the key figureheads behind Burgundy's recent recognition as a UNESCO heritage site, Guillaume shares with us the belief-set behind his estate, the secrets to what makes Burgundy so special, an insider look into the UNESCO heritage site acknowledgment, and his view on the past 4 years witnessing the China market with Summergate.

To start, could you tell us briefly the strengths and highlights of your Domaine, and the role of your father at the regional level?

D'Angerville: "Domaine Marquis d'Angerville has been owned by my family for over 200 years and has always been run by a family member. I am the sixth generation at the helm, having taking over the estate when my late father Jacques passed away in 2003. Many words of wisdom, "how-tos" and other winemaking techniques have thus been transmitted from one generation to the next,

over an extended period of time. Above all, a certain winemaking philosophy has become the trademark of the domaine, mostly initiated by my grandfather, who replanted the domaine in 1905-06, after the phylloxera crisis. This philosophy calls for constantly pursuing elegance and purity in the wines produced, and minimising human intervention so that the terroir can speak for itself.

My father devoted significant time and energy to Burgundy as a whole. He was president of BIVB, the local professional board, on two occasions, and was a founding member and the first president of Institut Jules Guyot, the vine and wine department of the University of Dijon. He was also president of the French Wine Academy (Académie du Vin de France) and a longstanding member of the International Wine Academy (Académie Internationale du Vin).



Before him, my grandfather Sem was a founding member of Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO, the regulatory body supervising, inter alia, wine production) and cast in stone, with his friend Henri Gouges (owner of a famous estate in Nuits-Saint-Georges), the classification of the Côte d'Or terroirs between Grands Crus, Premiers Crus and Village. This classification is still in force today, barring a few very limited exceptions.

As you can imagine, I am very proud of my predecessors and try my best to be worthy of them.

It's been four years since you trust Summergate for the distribution of your wines in China. Are you planning to allocate more wines there in the future? Do you think the Chinese market will become a must for Burgundy wine?

D'Angerville: "I am very pleased with my relationship with Summergate. Summergate distributes the limited allocations I offer for Mainland China in a very intelligent way. I cannot say I know or understand this fascinating country, having only visited Shanghai once, but I am certain that Burgundy must be present there, in its own way. The scale of Burgundy - one tenth of Bordeaux in size - is such that any approach to the Chinese market must recognize that we will never be in a position to supply enough wine to be present everywhere in China.

In this context, it is crucial to entrust the right people to approach the Chinese market. I believe Summergate has understood what I was trying to achieve, and I expect my allocation to the Chinese market will grow over the medium term.”

Just like many of the prestigious areas of Burgundy, you made the choice of biodynamic cultivation in 2006. Could you explain why this process could be the future of viticulture? Is it an important risk at the economic level?

D’Angerville: “When I returned to Volnay in 2003, I visited Anne-Claude Leflaive for friendly advice. She had converted Domaine Leflaive to bio-dynamiy in the early 1990s. She was quick to convince me to do the same at Domaine Marquis d’Angerville in Volnay. Initially, my aim was simply to protect my terroirs (which we call "climats" in Burgundy), against the constant aggression from chemical products used to cure diseases in the vineyard. It was, if you will, an ecology-driven process. However, I realized that bio-dynamiy also brings the vigneron closer to the plant, as constant supervision and closer care is necessary to prevent diseases when one no longer has recourse to chemical-based products to cure them. It is undeniable that the vineyard is in great shape today, and my wines have gained in purity and energy. It seems certain that chemical-based products will have to disappear from quality viticulture, as consumers will refuse to be exposed to them while drinking expensive wine. But converting to bio-dynamiy is easier for smaller estates than it is for larger ones.”

The notion of climate is essential to understanding Burgundy. Could you give us your definition?

D’Angerville: “In Burgundy, the term climat refers to a specific vineyard site, a parcel or plot of land whose limits have been determined over several centuries by the local winemakers. In the



vast majority of cases, Burgundy's climats have their own specific set of geological, inclination, hygrometry and exposure characteristics, although their perimeter, never modified and still applying today, usually predates scientific knowledge of climate and geology. The parcels, which can be as small as one or two acres, often separated by small stone walls or dirt roads, together form a mosaic over a 60 kilometer long, east-facing hillside. Benedictine and Cistercian monks were instrumental in this

chiseling out and it is during their great period of influence (900 to 1300) that most of Burgundy's 1,247 different climats were so christened.

Each climat translates into one specific wine (and one name used by all producers, written on the label) which therefore bears the name of the plot of land where it was produced. Nowhere else in the world has man shown such determination to so precisely link an agricultural production to its place of origin. Hence Burgundy has become the world model for terroir viticulture, with the single vine selection and culture (pinot noir for reds and chardonnay for whites) allowing the most subtle differences between even adjacent climats to become apparent.

Burgundy's use of the word climat therefore aims to designate in one single word the specific attributes of a specific vineyard site, and link these to the specific characteristics of the wine produced there. Matt Kramer, a renowned American writer on Burgundy once used the word "somewhere-ness" to explain the Burgundian concept of climat.

After several centuries of oral transmission of the map of 1,247 climats, it was cast in stone in 1935 through the "Décret des Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée" which today regulates production and commercial practices in Burgundy."

After Vineyards of the Valais, Porto and Saint-Emilion, now it is Burgundy's turn to be a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Why has this recognition come somewhat late?

D'Angerville: "The Climats of Burgundy were inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2015. Through this inscription, UNESCO recognises Burgundy's "Outstanding Universal Value" as a cultural landscape. The cultural landscape category is particularly appropriate for Burgundy because the inscription rests not only on the landscape, however beautiful it is, but also, most importantly, on our very long history. The inscription recognizes the importance of the patient chiseling of the region into small plots, and of the decision, so intelligently made, as early as the 14th century, to use only one varietal for red wines (pinot noir) and one vine for white wines (chardonnay). It also highlights the central role played by the Cistercian monks and the Dukes of Burgundy in organising Burgundy's viticulture as we still know it today. In a nutshell, the inscription on the World Heritage List salutes the work of man on nature to extract the most from a very unique territory, over a 2,000 year period.

With this long background in mind, I would argue that a few years extra wait before the UNESCO inscription makes no difference at all.

What prompted you to engage personally in this application to UNESCO? What was your role as deputy chairman of the association of support for the registration of climates?

D'Angerville: "I have been immediately overwhelmed by this worthy cause, and impressed by the amount of scientific work that had been put into the application. I did not think twice when Aubert de Villaine (Co-owner of D.R.C. / editor's note), who had so aptly presided the Association that was sponsoring the application to UNESCO, asked for my help. It was my duty and it was a pleasure. I am very privileged to own an estate with magnificent terroirs, and somehow I thought my commitment to the UNESCO listing was a way to acknowledge this privilege and to give back to Burgundy a small portion of what Burgundy has been giving my predecessors and myself, vintage after vintage.



My role has been to second Aubert de Villaine who deserves the credit for this remarkable achievement. Any UNESCO application is very hard and complex work, requiring a lot of energy, outstanding communication skills and many pages of explanations. This is most true for our specific application as the concept of Climat as we understand it in Burgundy, was broadly unknown to the rest of the world. The team was very compact and we had a lot to accomplish. Motivation, team spirit and building a common goal was essential for success. I helped Aubert de Villaine in his daily tasks regarding the application and worked very closely with Krystel Lepresle, General Manager, and her team, to produce and edit the numerous documents we had to prepare."

Did these last eight years investigating the case, allowed you to make unexpected discoveries?

D'Angerville: "I learnt a great deal working alongside Aubert de Villaine on this project. In itself, this was a great reward for my commitment. I cannot possibly list everything I learnt and all the surprises I discovered, but here is one. The French word "climat" comes from the Greek word "klima" which means "slope" or "exposure". When I discovered that, I thought this etymology was particularly fitting for us Burgundians, whose "climats" are all different from one another because of their relative positions on the east facing slopes of Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits. We call our terroirs "climats" for a good reason."

Were you surprised by the strong mobilization that took place around the support for this application?

D'Angerville: "More than 60,000 individuals registered as supporters to the Association in the context of the application. This was very rewarding for the team and such popular support was also a significant plus vis-à-vis Unesco. The World Heritage Committee likes popular support to the listing as it is easier to manage the site post-inscription if the local population supports the listing."

Some voices were also high against the project at the beginning. The most reluctant now seem to have changed their minds and have rallied to the cause or at least became more discreet. How do you explain these positions and reversal of opinion?

D'Angerville: "It is quite understandable that such a significant project would raise questions. For example, many wondered whether Burgundy really needed all this extra publicity since its wines were already famous worldwide. Today, these questions are no longer asked, as the benefits of the Unesco recognition are obvious. The listing will help preserve our culture, our traditions, our savoir-faire and our viticulture model. Yet, Unesco recognizes that Burgundy is an economically active territory whose development cannot be curtailed by unnecessary constraints. We welcome the renewed support we have received since the inscription, which reflects a better understanding of what is at stake for Burgundy as a whole..."

Is it possible that the World Heritage listing attracts property investors and that the price of land continues to climb - with all that this entails as a problem of succession and negative effects of speculation?

D'Angerville: "Land prices continue to rise in Burgundy, and this is indeed an issue, especially for family-owned estates. But the Unesco listing is not responsible for the land price increases, and I don't expect it to be in the future either. Investors have been paying very high, economically irrational prices for well-known appellations, to have access to the very rare wines they produce and benefit from a favorable supply/demand relationship. They don't purchase vineyards because they are on the World Heritage List."

What do you expect from the UNESCO classification for Burgundy? And for your domaine, does it change anything?

D'Angerville: "The World Heritage Listing is very positive for Burgundy on many accounts. It helps the local population better understand that they live in a very unique site, which is often taken for granted. It encourages further curiosity to better understand our long history, be it by scientists, historians, economists, or private individuals for private consumption. The success of our publications and of our conferences is concrete evidence of this. Furthermore, the inscription will help us preserve our landscapes, our culture and traditions, as discussed earlier, and it will encourage us to transmit them to the next generations with pride, enthusiasm and passion. The listing will also encourage renovation work and promote intelligent and coherent expansion without inhibiting economic development.



Finally, at a time when ill-advised lobbying groups put pressure on politicians to discourage wine consumption and promote a negative image of wine, this listing is a sweet victory, not just for Burgundy but for all the French wine regions and all the professionals involved in the wine sector in France. This is particularly true since "Coteaux, Maisons et caves de Champagne" were also inscribed on the World Heritage List in July

2015, alongside the Climats of Burgundy.

For my estate in particular, nothing changes, other than a renewed consciousness and pride to be working in such a unique site, and realizing that one must remain very humble before our Climats: we are only borrowing our terroirs from the next generation..."

We talk a lot about the impact of the UNESCO recognition in terms of tourist appeal. Do you think that Burgundy is ready to welcome these new visitors? Moreover, the doors of the most prestigious Burgundy areas are usually closed to visitors: is this not contradictory? Domaines should evolve on more availability and hospitality even if it increase cost of the visits don't you think?

D'Angerville: "Conventional wisdom dictates that the UNESCO listing normally attracts 20-30% more tourists, immediately after inscription. The Association has mandated a consultancy group to study the impact of additional tourists on the region. With the benefit of the results of this study, we will work closely with the relevant local agencies (e.g. Côte d'Or Tourisme) to help build

coherent proposals for tourists, that will help discover the Climats and be respectful of the winemaking sector.

Many tourist routes have already been identified and others will follow. Any tourism must not disturb economic activity, notably with unmanageable traffic on the dirt roads between climats.

Your comment regarding visits in prestigious estates is not relevant to the UNESCO inscription. The inscription is not meant to promote wine, let alone specific domaines, however prestigious. It recognises our history, our culture, our landscapes and our winemaking model, as discussed before.”

Let's talk about philosophy: "Wine is what is most civilized in the world" stated Rabelais [Treaty proper use of wine]. How do you perceive the link between culture and wine? For you, how does it illustrate?

D'Angerville: “Wine and culture are closely and staunchly associated. UNESCO recognized this relationship with its decision to list the Climats of Burgundy as a cultural landscape. Another way to look at culture is to accept that it refers to the action of man on nature. Burgundy is all about that.

Drinking wine is a cultural, civilized act, which helps good thinking and encourages social exchange. English philosopher Roger Scruton wrote a marvelous book on the subject, aptly entitled " I drink therefore I am". I recommend anyone interested in the subject to read it.”

For more information about the outstanding Marquis d'Angerville, and how to find it in China, contact us at info@summergate.com