

# A Quality Producer Of Fine Burgundy Wines

An Interview with Thomas Seiter, President, Maison Louis Jadot

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Thomas Seiter became President of Maison Louis Jadot on January 1, 2023. He succeeded Pierre-Henry Gagey who had held the role for 31 years. Seiter has more than 25 years of experience working in the wine industry, most recently as the CEO of Bouchard Père et Fils in Burgundy. With this appointment, Seiter returns to his roots in Gevrey-Chambertin.*



Thomas Seiter

**WINERY BRIEF** *Maison Louis Jadot (louisjadot.com) is one of the most trusted and revered wine houses in Burgundy's Côte d'Or. The Louis Jadot team balances tradition and technology, focusing on the purest expression of each wine's terroir. Founded in 1859, Maison Louis Jadot now owns 528 acres of vineyards, including 280 acres of the Côte d'Or's most prestigious Premier and Grand Cru plots.*

**Will you provide an overview of the history and heritage of Maison Louis Jadot?**

Maison Louis Jadot was established in 1859 by Louis Henry Denis Jadot in Beaune, where it flourished and grew into the prestigious and revered wine house in Burgundy's Côte d'Or. Having settled in Beaune, the center of Burgundy, Louis Jadot established itself as a historic house with the breadth to produce quality appellations from Villages to Premier and Grand Cru. Today, Louis Jadot remains a family-owned business – and has been for generations. It is still one of the few remaining independent and family-owned wine houses in the region.

**What interested you in the opportunity to lead Louis Jadot and made you feel it was the right fit?**

If you are being offered the opportunity to lead a house like Louis Jadot, you must consider it. Its history, heritage, and prominence in the Burgundy wine industry made this an impossible opportunity to turn away from. After one year in my position, I am confident it is the right fit because I can bring a new perspective alongside great reverence for the brand. I understand Burgundy because I have a historical connection to the area. I grew up in Gevrey-Chambertin and ran another storied Burgundy house, Bouchard Père e Fils, for more than six years. I have lived the Burgundy experience and understand many of the complexities of not only the

wine business but, more specifically, the wine business in Burgundy. While all houses are different, there are similarities in the business model and thanks to my time at Bouchard, I have the clarity to see the things that can be improved and the experience to understand what makes Louis Jadot unique. I feel I can make improvements while still keeping the brand's DNA and exceptional quality.

**How important is it for Louis Jadot to balance tradition with modern market dynamics in the wine industry?**

Simply speaking, it is crucial. The balance between tradition and modern market trends is vital because if you are too focused on tradition, you become stuck. At the same time, you cannot forget your history and heritage. Louis Jadot, in many ways, still produces wine the same as our ancestors. While we have a deeper understanding of the process and technology,

it is the same foundational elements that have allowed us to remain an industry leader for so long. The key word here is balance since it's essential to understand the history of the brand and region while still having open eyes on trends and industry dynamics. The highest respect we owe to customers and our partners is to respect our DNA. As business stewards, we must identify and clarify the brand's vision and image while staying true to our core. We must respect who we are, and if we do it correctly, we will continue to please our customers.

**Will you discuss your approach to transforming the brand's awareness into an enduring reputation by aligning the brand more seamlessly with its venerable Maison de Burgundy heritage?**

That is the challenge, really. Louis Jadot has amazing awareness thanks to its fantastic distribution. Everyone knows and recognizes the name Louis Jadot. It's my goal to transform that recognition into reputation, which comes through a clear and consistent brand image.



Maison Louis Jadot vineyards in the Burgundy region of France



Our commitment to quality and deeply rooted history demands the highest respect, and we need to be proud of sharing that history with our customers. It is our priority to establish and communicate a clear brand image and consistent message to our customers.

**What is your outlook on strengthening Louis Jadot's position as the premier producer of quality wines in Burgundy?**

It is about the perception of the brand. Louis Jadot is, at its core, a quality producer of fine Burgundy wines, and we are the maker of the #1 selling French red and white wine in America. It already exists in our brand DNA that Louis Jadot is the premier producer of wine in the region. Still, it's our duty to impress that upon our audience and reestablish that brand identity so that we can reach younger audiences and continue to elevate the brand for years to come. We must look ahead to the future and think about where Louis Jadot will be in 10 years. We need to reinforce this image to be stronger, but we must first be clear about who Louis Jadot is, what it is that we want to do, and understand which strategies to enact to get there. We must respect who we are, and if we do it correctly, we will continue our industry leadership.

**Will you highlight Louis Jadot's commitment to sustainability?**

Louis Jadot has always been concerned about sustainability and the environment. While it's compulsory to be a certified organic grower and producer in Burgundy today, we have focused on this area long before it was mandated. It's our priority to produce quality wines at every appellation, so managing the vineyards responsibly is essential. We pay close

attention to our vineyards and enact strategies to avoid using harsh chemicals where possible. Aside from our certified organic status, Louis Jadot has taken steps to be a responsible producer in all stages of production. We are certified High Environmental Value (HVE3 in France), which applies to the production process, including waste management, energy consumption and more. Since my tenure here, we have been actively looking to enhance sustainable practices. I have even created a new position – sustainability manager – to oversee the quality and sustainability of the brand. Looking ahead, we are exploring the possibility of lowering the weight of bottles to reduce our environmental impact throughout the process, in addition to other practices that are too early to discuss.

**What is the current state of the wine industry in France?**

It's a bit broad. Some regions face more difficulties than others due to slowing retail sales and the competition for entry-level markets. Bordeaux, specifically, is going through a difficult time globally regarding production. However, some other regions are still thriving; Champagne, for example, is still producing high amounts of product and seeing growth. That said, the premier wine industry is currently strong, even as entry levels are seeing slowing purchases. Burgundy is still doing well and adjusting its production capacity to match market demand.

The industry, overall, faces a challenge breaking ground with younger audiences and entry-level drinkers. We need to understand what the new generation is looking for and who they are. This will let us know how to talk to them without sacrificing our brand's vision and



responsibility to produce quality wine under appellation. We need to evaluate and discuss current trends with our brand DNA and reach this younger audience in ways that are ownable and authentic.

**What attracted you to a career in the wine industry, and what has made the industry so special for you?**

My passion for wine initially attracted me since I grew up in wine-producing regions, and my father was keen on wines, too. When I graduated from university, I had an opportunity at Moët Hennessy to work in cognac, which I jumped at since it was close to wine production. I then moved to the wine division and have stayed in the industry ever since. I started there by choice and stayed because I had amazing opportunities to work with great producers. It's an excellent industry to work in, especially when you have experiences with quality producers who have products with history and tradition. Throughout my career, I have felt I have a responsibility as a brand steward to maintain that reputation, and it is an exciting challenge.

One of the things I find most extraordinary and inspiring about our industry is that we rely on nature. This is why it is so crucial for us to act responsibly. No matter how much planning we do, we depend on a harvest. It all comes together to keep us humble. We try to create the best quality wines for the appellation, thanks to what Mother Nature gives us. Even more humbling is that the world has changed so much with the introduction of new-world wines. Today, you can meet people from all over the world who are creating excellent quality wines. The diversity of people you can meet in the industry has developed so much, and these meetings make the work so great and exciting. ●



*Maison Louis Jadot wine tanks (above) and barrels (top right)*