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Latour Winery: Great Burgundies Since the 1600s

Latour makes great wines on both ends of the price spectrum.

By [Ted Scheffler](#)

In this country, we think of wineries that have been around since the 1970s as venerable and time-tested. In France, it's another story altogether. Maison Louis Latour, for example, has been making wines in Burgundy since the 17th century. And, in the intervening centuries, the folks at Latour have learned a lot about the two noble grape varieties they plant: Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. All of the Latour wines are made with either Chardonnay (the whites) or Pinot Noir (the reds) grapes, which makes them easy to understand. The company is still family-run and is known throughout the world for the high quality of its red and white Burgundies. We are lucky to have many of them available here in Utah. And, I was fortunate this month to be able to sample a range of Latour wines, some I purchased for tasting at home and others I enjoyed at a phenomenal Latour wine dinner held at The Paris Bistro.

One thing I like about Latour wines is that the ones at the lower end of the price scale allow buyers like me, who aren't rich, to get into French Burgundy without blowing the budget. Yes, Latour makes wines that can be, for many, cost-prohibitive. But, intro-level red and white Burgundies from Latour can be had in the \$10-\$15 range. On the other hand, if you have \$96 burning a hole in your pocket, by all means grab yourself a bottle of Latour Corton Charlemagne; it's fabulous. You'll want to be patient and stow it away for a few years. Although this powerful, well-balanced white Grand Cru Burgundy is beautiful now, it'll get better and better for quite some time.

Can't afford Corton Charlemagne? I understand. It is, after all, one of the most sought-after wines in the world. But, let me share a little secret with you: While picking the brain of Maison Louis Latour's Guillaume Akouka, I learned that the Grand Ardeche, which sells for a mere \$10.99, is given the same treatment by Latour winemakers as their pricey Grand Cru wines. Ripe Chardonnay grapes are chosen and lightly pressed before undergoing aging in oak barrels made at the Maison's cooperage in Beaune, France. I'm not saying that for just 10 beans you're getting Corton Charlemagne. However, in a side-by-side tasting of the Corton and Grand Ardeche, I could definitely tell that the latter had a great provenance and some of the luscious characteristics (soft spice notes and vanilla) of the more expensive wine.

A step up from the Grand Ardeche is another winning Chardonnay, Montagny Premier Cru "La Grande Roche" (\$19.99), with honeyed aromas and apricot notes on the tongue. It was marvelous, paired with foie gras-studded chestnut and celery root soup at The Paris' Latour wine dinner.

A good entry-level red Burgundy from Latour is its Bourgogne Pinot Noir (\$14.99), which, while tasting a bit young and tannic, still gives you a peek behind the door of Latour's great red Burgundies. For something earthier, try Latour Marsannay (\$18.99), which is more fleshy with a gamey terroir character—a good food wine. Most of the aforementioned wines I had tasted in previous years. However, at The Paris wine dinner, I got to enjoy for the first time the Aloxé-Corton Premier Cru "Les Chaillots," which tasted like it should cost a helluva lot more than \$47.50. Coming from Aloxé-Corton, the native village of the Latour family, this is a wine with great mineral backbone (Chaillots refer to the pebbles in the vineyard), finesse, cherry and licorice notes, and length that just won't quit. It's just one of many good reasons to love Latour.

