



A COUPLE WEEKS AGO, I GOT TOGETHER WITH WINEMAKER, LUC MORLET TO TASTE HIS PORTFOLIO OF WINES AT THE GREAT HALL OF VINEYARD 7&8 ON SPRING MOUNTAIN, A LOCATION THAT MAKES IT A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO CONCENTRATE ON ANYTHING BESIDES THE VIEW. LUC WAS SPORTING THE LOOK POPULAR AMONGST MOST WINEMAKERS (AT LEAST THE GUYS) RIGHT NOW, A DAY WITHOUT A RAZOR. I REALIZED THAT WE WERE DOING THIS JUST AT THE BEGINNING OF HARVEST, BUT WITH EIGHTEEN WINES TO TASTE BETWEEN THREE BRANDS, I THINK WE BOTH REALIZED NEITHER OF US WAS LEAVING ANYTIME SOON. JOINING US FOR THE TASTING OF THEIR WINES WERE HIS CLIENTS, WESLEY STEFFENS, OF VINEYARD 7& 8, AND VALERI BURE, OF BURE. WHEN THE FIRST WINE IS SOMETHING THAT GIVEN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES I WOULD JUST BE CONTENT TO SMELL FOR SEVERAL HOURS I KNEW THAT WHAT FOLLOWED LIKELY WOULD PROVIDE A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE. I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED... SOON THE SUN SET, AND LUC AND I WERE ALONE, TASTING WINES TOGETHER. WITH THE 7&8, AND BURE WINES FINISHED, WE ENTERED THE REALM OF MORLET. WHAT BEGAN AT TWO THIRTY IN THE AFTERNOON FINALLY CONCLUDED A LITTLE MORE THAN AN HOUR BEFORE IT WAS THE NEXT DAY. WHAT I EXPERIENCED WAS AN ASTONISHING BODY OF WORK, COLLECTIVELY THE BEST WINES I HAVE REVIEWED.

doug wilder – pdwr, october 2011

LUC MORLET TASTING

MORLET @ VINEYARD 7&8, SPRING MOUNTAIN, WITH LUC MORLET

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|--------|------|---|-----------------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|
| MORLET | 2009 | WHITE WINE, LA PROPORTION DOREE 68SM 30SB 2MU | SONOMA COUNTY | 14.5% | 660 cs. | \$60 | 97 |
| MORLET | 2010 | WHITE WINE, LA PROPORTION DOREE 68SM 30SB 2MU * | SONOMA COUNTY | 14.5% | 660 cs. | \$65 | 95 |
| MORLET | 2009 | SYRAH, BOUQUET GARNI 100SR (SOLDOUT) | BENNETT VALLEY | 14.1% | 150 cs. | NA | 94 |
| MORLET | 2009 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON, PASSIONNÉMENT | OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY | 15.2% | 200 cs. | \$225 | 100 |
| MORLET | 2009 | RED WINE, COEUR DE VALLÉE | OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY | 15.2% | 250 cs. | \$175 | 97+ |
| MORLET | 2009 | RED WINE, MON CHEVALIER 86CS 8CF 3MR 2MB 1PV | KNIGHTS VALLEY | 15.2% | 250 cs. | \$155 | 92 |
| MORLET | 2009 | SEMILLON, LATE HARVEST, BILLET DOUX 375mL | ALEXANDER VALLEY | 16.2% | 125 cs. | \$85 | 100 |

* 2010 LA PROPORTION DOREE IS RELEASED IN FALL 2012 | WINES ARE LISTED IN SEQUENCE THEY WERE TASTED

Luc Morlet is a fourth generation winemaker whose family owns the Champagne house, **Pierre Morlet et Fils**. His first job in California was 1993 for a year. He returned permanently in 1996 to join his future wife, Jodie. Initially at **Newton**, on Spring Mountain with **John Kongsgaard**, he created five vintages of the iconic **Newton Unfiltered Chardonnay** through 2000. He followed that up with five vintages at **Peter Michael**, in Knights Valley, where he now consults, with his brother, **Nic**, who succeeded him in 2006. That was the year he and Jodie began **Morlet Family Vineyards**. Their debut **2006 La Proportion Doree**, received its first review in January 2008 at Vinfolio, where I scored it 95 points. An expanded portfolio followed including Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon – based wines, as well as a late harvest Semillon. It didn't take long for his talent to get recognized far and wide.

OK – so you have read the details in the table above and are probably curious to read more, so let's get to it... This was my first formal, collective *degustation* of Morlet's projects, I know, it surprised me too. These wines make you want to disappear and immerse yourself in them, not unlike being newly in love. Which brings me to something I am very serious about - I spend lots of time with wines I am reviewing – here it was an average of 30 minutes per sample, periodically going back to a position within the flight to see how it was evolving, creating a composite note, scratching out, adding new thoughts in the margins as I went along. Beyond that, consider this: The samples from the September 29 tasting came back to my office and I am writing these notes two weeks later on the morning of October 12. The bottles have either been in the refrigerator (whites), or covering the floor next to my desk. Nothing was done to try to 'save' them. So for the last couple hours, I have been popping corks and revisiting some of them. The **2009 and 2010 Morlet LPD** are still vibrant and rich, while the **Mon Chevalier**, even though a little reduced in the nose is still powerfully built, and beautifully smooth now, shedding its tannins (that likely knocked it down at least a point when first tasted). At this juncture it would be irresponsible to conjecture that the evolution/maturation in these wines merits qualitative re-evaluation. Nevertheless, It is a great pleasure to taste them again while writing the notes...remembering the first time.

MORLET www.morletwines.com

When it was just Luc and I left to taste HIS bottles that sat between us like pieces on a liquid chessboard. I imagined for a second what was ahead of me: “So Doug, you're completely gob smacked by what he makes for his clients... Do you really expect what he puts his own name to be anything less?” In a word, no... It didn't take long to discover that the remainder of the *degustation* would reveal even more superb wines. The fourth version of Morlet's seminal release, **2009 La Proportion Doree**, is an ethereal golden yellow, the color of EVOO. The nose has irresistible strength and a vortex of rich lemon chiffon, mineral and dense, polished tree fruit, pear, kumquat, rose water and white peach. The palate has extraordinary weight to the flavors of honeyed tree fruits, whiffs of dazzling, seductive Roquefort “bite” washed with a tactile, round brine. Drink 2011 – 2014. **2010 La Proportion Doree**, brings aromas of honeyed grapefruit with intense acidity to a firmly defined fruit presence of pear, anise with a slight earthy *gravitas*. On the palate is just more of what seems to be a given from Morlet; stunning weight and concentration that leaves the taster hopelessly looking for context – forget it... nobody else has the confidence to throw fifty year-old **Muscadelle** in their wine (or at least admit it). Drink 2011 – 2015 “As a point of reference, I fished the two opened samples of LPD out of the refrigerator last night and pulled the corks (the '10 only had a “stubbie” to begin with. Anyway, after tasting last night, I inadvertently left them on the counter over night (sans cork)... whoops? Not really. Two full weeks after initially being opened, they retain enough presence to impress one of the best old world noses I know, my wife. She is gob smacked too!” doug wilder, pdwr October 13, 2011

2009 Bouquet Garni, Unfortunately is sold out from the winery, however Luc included it for context (the gesture, although unnecessary, was appreciated). This example from Bennett Valley reminds of what Syrah can be like when in capable hands. A nose of violet, olive, graphite and bacon fat announce a truly inspired wine. The palate that follows leaves little to want for – stunning purity to the deep, smooth black fruit and floral spice leading to a long, seamless finish. Drink 2011 – 2019. **2009 Passionnément**, 100CS from Oakville and fermented in 600L puncheons is essentially, the no-holds-barred, *Ode to Jodie*, Luc's wife. Extraordinary wine at grand *apogee*, it could have been called anything I suppose, but the truth is always underneath the cork, a devotion, to love, to life, and to craft on however many levels you may want to imagine. The sumptuously gorgeous *parfum* of ancient, seductively scented heirloom stone fruits and plump, vibrant sour/sweet berry *assemblage* make me want to squirm in my seat. This wine is sooo locked in, it's un-nerving, and that's before I tasted it. The palate doesn't leave anything to chance; perfect pure blackberry, currant, java and faint curry are of impeccable weight, dimension and spectrum. I'm left grasping for superlatives. Drink 2011 – 2030. **2009 Coeur de Vallee**, is 76CS|24CF, sourced from the venerable Beckstoffer To-Kalon Vineyard, reduced to a single cluster prior to harvest, with the Franc fermented in 600L puncheon.. The first line of my note states: “Is there no stopping this guy?” The purity and intensity of the richly sculpted black fruit is breathtaking, the fruit saturates everything it touches and shows off ripe, black cherry and espresso notes on finish. Drink 2012 – 2025. **2009 Mon Chevalier**, a true *cinq cepages*, 86CS|08CF|03MR|02MB|01PV, all puncheon fermented. It maintains vitality in the nose of espresso, blackberry and vibrant intensity and has a measured, powerful palate that shows initial tannins that are subdued by an hour of air. **2009 Billet Doux**, a late harvest Semillon-based wine; 75SM|24SB|01MU is the emphatic thumbprint on this incredible body of work; just when I thought it was ‘over’. There is “one more thing” to paraphrase Steve Jobs. I can't think of any other domestic dessert wine, one of *trockenbeerenauslese* level residual sugar in my memory that has displayed this level of intensity, purity and extraction. It shows tons of rich, fresh apricot and peach, a dollop of espresso bean with a riveting, precise acid profile, and a silky, viscous texture. Drink 2011-2035.