

十拿酒穩

IT'S COOL: *Real Wine Brings*

Life

IT IS NOT EVERYDAY A MANGA (JAPANESE COMIC) CHARACTER COMES TO LIFE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES. WITH SLEEPY EYES IN THE PALEST SHADE OF SKY BLUE UNDER A SNOWY WHITE MOP OF HAIR, JEAN-PIERRE AMOREAU STARTLES ME BY MATERIALISING RIGHT OUT OF THE PAGES OF JAPANESE MANGA, DROPS OF GOD.

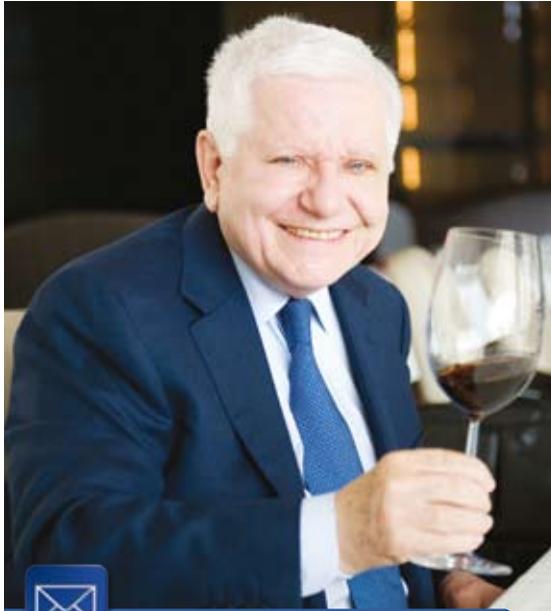


Jean-Pierre Amoreau is immortalised in the pages of the Japanese manga, *Drops Of God*.

JOINING HIM ARE SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA WINEMAKER PETER GAGO, AS WELL AS HIS CHILEAN COUNTERPART MICHEL FRIOU. AS THEY GET STARTED TELLING YOU ABOUT THEIR WINES, THE UNSTOPPABLE TORRENT OF THEIR LOVE FOR WINEMAKING TAKES YOU OVER AND CARRIES YOU STRAIGHT INTO THE INK- DRAWN, BOX-BOUND LANDSCAPES.

inside 

十拿酒稳



If today I am able to set you free from any complex you may have about wines, that would make me very satisfied.

Jean-Pierre Amoreau



Volume 21 of *Kami No Shizukuby Yuko and Shin Kibayashi*.

The 13th generation winemaker from the little-known, 402-year-old vineyard in Bordeaux really exists in real life. In the manga, the hero of the series, Shizuku Kanzaki, is in a quest for the ultimate wines known as *The Twelve Apostles*. As Shizuku steps into Château Le Puy, he exclaims, "The soil is as soft as cotton!" Why is this so? "Because the soil is alive," Amoreau says. Back in the 1920s, when chemical ways of combating pests came into the scene, his ancestors refused to buy them. Today, as in a few hundred years ago, the grounds of Château Le Puy are ploughed by horses. Once in a while an earthworm pokes its head out of the soil, just a hint of the 256 million creeping things bustling within each cubic metre of ground. Compared to Amoreau's vineyard, Michel Friou's vineyard in Chile, started 15 years ago, seems like a mere baby. "It's quite a handful," Friou shares. In the winter, he does the pruning of the Viña Almaviva vineyards, applies fertilisation, compost, removes prune shoots, and cleans and repairs the structure.

In spring, he makes a selection of the shoots, and props the shoots up with wire. Come harvest time, he sometimes tastes up to 200 berries in one day – all on his own. Seeing our horrified faces, he shakes his head and laughs. "I don't eat them," he says. "I just taste the skin. It's what gives the wine its flavour and tannins, and tells me if they are ripe." And unlike Château Le Puy, which has remained in the same family for more than 400 years, Peter Gago sources his grapes from growers. Lest you think this means a less personal wine, the winemaker at Penfolds assures you it does not. "We bought off their parents, and their grandparents. It's generational. It's a relationship." He spends a lot of his time in Adelaide Hill, and Coonawarra, while his fellow winemakers focus on Barossa, or McLaren Vale.



"With the Penfolds Thomas Hyland Chardonnay," he continues, "it is beautiful with our Coffin Bay oysters." When his friends from Singapore visit him, they always request for South Australian prawns, lightly boiled and crisp, or King George whiting, lightly grilled, with just a squeeze of lemon. This is in stark contrast to the 74-year-old French gentleman, for whom the study into food and wine pairing is a fad. "Making wine an intellectual thing is a very new aspect of wine, which only came into prominence in the last 50 years," Amoreau says. To him, wine is a beverage. Just like water, when you are thirsty, you drink it – food or no food. Because the fundamental purpose of wine is to quench the thirst, each time he comes across a wine which is not thirst-quenching, he considers it defective. Try his Marie-Cécile wines. The nose is an incredibly light and fresh wave of quince, honey, lemon tart, and orange marmalade, and drinking it, your whole being is revived, as though you've drunk liquid light. Living water, anyone?

Gago recalls the time when he had a beautifully chilled bottle of Dom Perignon on the beach in South Australia, with his parents and his wife, fish and chips balanced on their knees. "I'm first and foremost a wine lover and wine collector, before I am a winemaker. In this event that you are putting on, Masseto (of Tenuta dell'Ornellaia, one of the wine masterclasses put up in this year's World Gourmet Summit), I have been collecting them right from the start. I can probably tell you more about Masseto than the Masseto people!" For Amoreau, the highlight of wine memories was when he proposed to his wife, Françoise. He now has three children, and seven grandchildren.

He is particularly animated when talking about the little ones. "The ten-, eleven-, and 12-year-olds are always asking, 'When are we going to run the vineyard?'" His face beams with joy. Surprisingly, the young ones get to drink too, even if it's just a sip or two. "There is no age at which you have to start," he explains. For Asians who are unfamiliar with his wines, or wines in general, he says, "The first thing to do is very simple. Drink it, swallow it, and see if you like it." Each of us comes with our own experiences of tastes and aromas imprinted in our memories, accumulated layer by layer over the years. Therefore, you cannot find, in the whole entire world, two persons with the exact, same perception and taste. Sensing a remnant of hesitancy in your gaze, he reassures you, "You know exactly what suits your palate." To suit your preferences, you are the best and only expert.

Friou, who catches us off guard with his "Kita boleh cakap Bahasa sikit-sikit" ("I can speak Malay, but only a little"), enjoys having mee goreng (Malay fried noodles) and nasi goreng (Malay fried rice) for breakfast (he used to work in Malaysia when he was twenty-four). Now 46, he says, "It's been more than 20 years since I last came to Singapore, but I know there is a great culture of gastronomy in



Magazines, and even manga, break down the barriers, and make wine accessible for all people to enjoy.

Peter Gago

Singapore, which is really booming." He says that the most challenging thing is to find a good chef, and good ingredients. "A lot of people are afraid of pairing, but when the food is good, and the wine is good, you are not far away from a good pairing." Amoreau too finds a high sense of interest and the will to discover wines in Singapore, and attributes this to its relatively new exposure to wine. If you are one of those learned of his wines only after the 2009 broadcast of the final episode of the live action version of *Drops Of God*, in which 2003 Château Le Puy was that



Life; soul. Almameans soul, viva means life. That's what wine is about.

Michel Friou



elusive 'final apostle', he urges you to decide with your own palate, if it is indeed befitting of the title. He believes that the fashion of endless discussion about the aromas and complexities of a wine is a fad that is meant to slowly diminish, distinguish, and disappear. "Sometimes someone comes to me, and tells me, 'I don't know much about wine,' and that makes me feel so in despair, so disappointed, and so deceived," he says. If you are such a person, he asks that you "lose your complex, fears, and worries about wine," and put them all aside. Go first into the harmony of the wine, and find some happiness, that something that suits your taste. And with this, the Chilean winemaker is back under the hot Chilean sun gathering dirt under his nails, the Australian winemaker in another corner of the world holding an audience captive with his evangelistic zeal, and the French gentleman, quite unperturbed by the accolade given his wine, pottering amid a vineyard, line-drawn and sketched in black ink within the pages and the world of a paperback graphic novel. QL

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