One needs only a very short time in the company of Alexandra de Vazeilles to realise that she is *driven*, a perfectionist, and (come hell or high water) she will do things in her own way. As far as I can see, it is all working out perfectly!

The domaine is located on the road up to the centre of Fleurie from Romanèche-Thorins. The buildings began as an 11th century monastery of Benedictine monks who reported to Cluny - indeed it did so until it was burnt down during the French Revolution. What remained was bought as a *Bien Nationale* by a family of silk merchants from Lyon. This family kept the house until 2008. The next owners began to turn part of estate to ‘Bio’ production but then decided to sell in 2013. Alexandra de Vazeilles was the next owner and she recounts that it was always a *domaine viticole*, before 2008 there was thirty hectares, though only six remained when she bought. Now she has increased her holdings to ten hectares.

Alexandra says that she was always into wine and gastronomy, her problem was that she didn’t come from wine-making parents! Instead she started with an MBA in Chicago and worked in technology until she was able to return and buy her vines. There were some good tutors; Alexandra having worked with Jean-Marc
Roulot before working at Chateau Latour. There was an interval in Provence but in the end she was looking for more terroir in her wines than she could fine there. “Here in Fleurie I make the wine as I would in Bordeaux!”

Alexandra’s first decision was to convert the vineyards to Biodynamics – certified in 2016 – the first to be certified in Fleurie – not bad for an outsider! Stephane Deranoncourt is retained as consultant for both the vines and wine-making; Eleven thermo-regulated tanks plus an impressive old vertical wood press “Like at the Clos de Tart” greet you in the cuverie. Here there is a pre-fermentation cool maceration with 10% of the stems retained to aid drainage. The cuvaison can be anywhere between 2 weeks and 1 month. “My old vines bring only 25 hl/ha so I’m really not looking to push that. The best kept secrets of wine-making are great grapes and a proper cave! I had to renovate the cellar, get rid of the old barrels and renew the floors. I’ve tested everything for TCA and brett, et-cetera. I also make a little Pouilly-Vinzelles and Pouilly-Fuissé in some demi-muids and a foudre – there’s also a new foudre on the way! Gravity is important for me, I detest the giraffe!”

The domaine also produces Moulin à Vent and St.Amour, but ever the iconoclast, Alexandra chooses to bottle her produce in Bordeaux-style bottles – even the label seems redolent of Mouton-Rothschild – and she prefers not to use the word Beaujolais on her labels. USA is the main market which together with ‘Asia’ accounts for about 80% of production. Germany, Italy and Switzerland are also importing the wines. Prices range from €12 for the ‘Petit Fleur’, €28 the others except the ‘Clos’ which is €40 – prices that are based on slightly higher yields than have so-far been delivered!

**Alexandra de Vazeilles on 2014:** “2014 began with a lovely Spring, but until the 14th July I was worried about ripening, but then we enjoyed an Indian Summer. I had enough people for the 6 hectares but planned for fast picking at the optimum moment – we managed to do that in just 3 days – almost 15 days after many other people. I decided to declassify half the wine to IGP status. I’m using DIAM10 here, indeed DIAM30 for magnums.”

The wines...
2014 Petite Fleur IGP
Wine bottled in May. Gamay on granitic sand, south-facing with 21 days maceration. Only stainless-steel used and a quite fast 8 month élevage. Good colour, a nicely floral nose, faint reduction but attractively so. Lovely in the mouth, super texture, very nicely balanced, indeed very elegant wine. Long in a modest way but finely persistent...

2014 Fleurie
Here the élevage was part foudre and part stainless steel. Here is a more obvious reduction, but a freshness and fine texture behind - clearing from the glass with a little swirling. Similar texture, fine and cushioned, to the last wine, but here is more dimension of flavour, more floral aspects. A nice edge of minerality too. More clarity of aroma now...

2014 Fleurie Le Clos
Only a wall separates this wine from the last. This is the same clos as worked by the monks of the domaine. A little less reductive than the last two - really adding a super dimension of depth. Here is a more mineral wine, a wine of energy, a wine with more structure, still with fine control of the tannin. Then a fine wave of fresh, mouth-watering flavour, a more mineral wine and of super length - bravo!

2014 Moulin à Vent
'A very diverse appellation. Here a parcel that's really on granite.' Half wood, half stainless-steel élevage, 28 days cuvaison and no filtration.
A big open, wide nose, fine and fresh, dark fruited but with a certain softness and a very slowly opening floral note. Here is really a very mineral wine, more direct, sleek, a faint tannic drag. Insinuating dark fruit/mineral flavour. The most impressive weight of finishing flavour of these wines so far. A very different beast - but I love it.

2014 St.Amour
One of the greatest wines of my whole 'tour!' This seems deeper coloured. 'More clay here.' There also seems more aromatic volume here - of freshness, accented with herb - wait long enough and it slowly transforms to a more floral aromatic. Luxurious texture, layers of flavour washing over the palate, a freshness of rather more mineral flavour than many of this appellation. The finish is a super-persistent dark minerality - and, at the same time, very tasty. The nose is now very complex and like then palate not a little tasty.
RANKING

My list is far from exhaustive, and of course it reflects my palate and the visits and blind tastings that I’ve made so far. I’m looking for real fruit, not artificial carbonic fruit! But here you will find some really great wines, wines priced from too low to ambitious for the market, yet sensible for the quality.

Beaujolais Villages – Domaine des Nugues
Brouilly & Côte de Brouilly – Château Thivin
Chénas – Claire & Fabien Chasselay
Chiroubles – Fabien Collonge
Fleurie & St.Amour - Château des Bachelards I Comtesse de Vazeilles
Juliénas – Jeremy Bally, Les Bois du Chat
Morgon – Mee Godard
Moulin à Vent – Le NID
Régnie – Château de la Terrière