Domaine J.A. Ferret

TÊTE DE CRU "CLOS DES PROUGES"

2018



Region
Mâconnais

Appellation
Pouilly-Fuissé

Grape variety
Chardonnay

Situation
Situated right in the centre of the village of Fuissé, this Clos is just over two "hectares" in size and is planted on a shallow slope that faces east.

Age of the vines
Although a small parcel of vines was planted in 2003, most of the vineyard dates back to 1956, and is therefore more than 60 years old, making it one of the oldest owned by the domaine.

Soil
The soil is derived from limestone-rich marls deposited during the upper Bathonian.

Vinification
Fermentation and maturation took place in barrel, of which 20% were new and 80% were 2nd, 3rd and 4th use. Maturation lasted 10 months, then the wine spent a further 8 months in stainless steel tanks on fine lees. Then, on the afternoon of 16 March 2020, much like the rest of France, the wine was confined (in glass bottles, in this instance);

Tasting
Despite its typically Fuissé opulence, this wine is also capable of demonstrating great precision. On the palate, this wine is so notable for its sculpted precision as well as its fleshy, juicy character.

Food pairing
Snails in puff pastry, veal steak in sauce, goat's cheeses and hard cow's cheeses

Vintage
Living on our nerves.

The start of winter 2018 was a gloomy one: the weather was rainy and sullen, with frequent squalls and disturbances... Thanks to the level of rainfall, which was among the highest recorded in Burgundy between 1959 and 2018, this winter will long be remembered, not least of all for the level of saturation in the soil. Although temperatures were exceptionally mild in January, February's frozen kiss set the final seal on winter, bringing with it an extreme - if late - cold snap.

This miserable winter was followed by a spring whose start bring to mind the first verses of Paul Verlaine's poem, 'It's raining in my heart, like it's raining on the town... Oh, hear the song of the rain', rather than those of Victor Hugo, 'Here come the long days, the light, love, delight! Here comes spring! March and April, with their sweet smile'.

But despite the relatively chilly weather in March, an early heat spike resulted in budbreak around, 15 April, more or less the average for the past decade. This was, by coincidence, the beginning of a period of mild, dry weather that allowed us to plant (on the morning of 23 April) our small parcel at Tournant de Pouilly, which has been left fallow for several years. As the days passed, we noted with delight that, after several years of poor yields, we had a healthy bunch set.

May brought with it some mild weather, allowing the vines to gain a week of growth (on the decade's average), a lead that was maintained right through to veraison on 20 July. In the Mâconnais, the month of May brought with it some heavy localised rainfall - in some places more than 100mm - but Fuissé itself wasn't touched, which, in turn, meant that we avoided any risk of downy mildew.

We were blessed by the gods in this vintage, as we didn't have to deal with the attacks of powdery mildew that threaten Chardonnay in particular (the vintage is particularly susceptible to infection). The expected outbreak didn't happen, in the end, largely thanks to weather conditions that were unfavourable to fungal development. On the other hand this year, as in 2017, accumulated water levels helped the plants grow exponentially during the warm periods that followed the rainfall. Growers found that they needed to be everywhere at once in order to trim the leaves and raise the canopy - vegetative growth was so extreme that we found no respite from the task. Alas, this pattern is increasingly the norm - so much so that it barely rates any comment in the region...

In total contrast to the gloomy winter, summer 2018 was the second-warmest summer since 1900, with a heatwave taking place during the post-veraison period towards the end of July through to mid-August. Rather ironically, given the start to the growing season, we found ourselves wishing for rain... There were significant disparities in weather across the Mâconnais. Without leaving the region, we could observe levels of rainfall that doubled by going from one village to another... Furthermore, right from the start of August, we began to be

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concerned for our young vines planted on schist in Fuissé: we were powerless to help as the leaves turned yellow and the grapes withered.

On 15 August, we began to monitor levels of ripeness. On 20 August the first pickers began their work in the commune but... at the Domaine, we decided to wait. The first to begin picking in 2015 and 2017 in order to maintain levels of freshness, in this heatwave year we found ourselves biding our time! The lack of water was felt most profoundly in Fuissé, where ripening was completely blocked. Late-ripening Vergisson, on the other hand, was the commune that saw the greatest amount of rainfall, and as a result proceeded at a normal pace.

By the 25th of August, with no rain forecast for the next three weeks, we were left hoping for a miracle.

On 28 August, in order to save our thirsty vines, we decided to use a small team to pick our three parcels planted on granitic soils... Then we waited, holding our breath... One day followed another, tension climbed... The sky remained obstinately blue, the afternoons were torrid.

1 September. Still waiting, with no certainty of success - just the hope of change, despite cloudless skies and parched soils.

Oh! Blessed respite! The first few days of September brought cool nights. We might not have had any rain, but the drop in temperatures offered some relief. Over the course of two nights, we saw the features of the vineyards change and the grapes plump up. We could, at long last, begin picking. Our job was still a delicate one, thanks to very uneven levels of ripeness that dictated a convoluted route through the vineyards, travelling backwards and forwards between Fuissé and Vergisson.

On 12 September, we stopped picking in order to allow the last vines to complete their ripening.

On 20 September, we picked up our secateurs once again in order to complete the longest harvest period in the history of the Domaine.

We took the risk of wait, following the maxim of author Ronald Wright, 'When you have many choices before you... and you can't make a decision between them, always take the path that requires the most courage...' We hope, in time, to see our patience rewarded.

The wines of this vintage are, today, delicate and refined, not unlike those of 2017, and whose hallmark characteristics of elegance, tension and generosity were totally unexpected after such a tumultuous growing year.