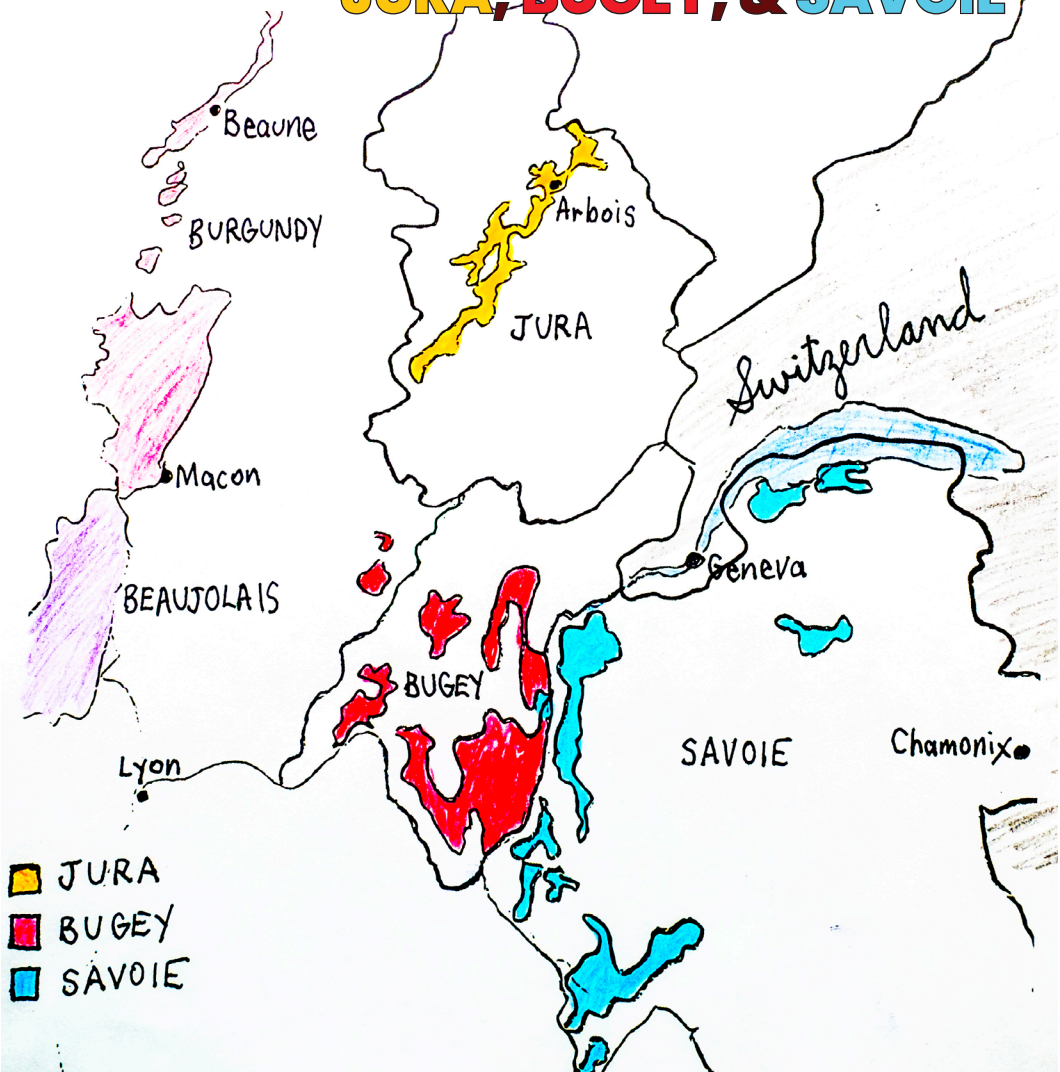




DIRECT PRESS

May 2023

JURA, BUGEY, & SAVOIE



Stocky

brown Montbéliarde

cows graze in a verdant meadow tucked into an undulating, craggy landscape punctuated by the icy austerity of azure lakes and snow-frosted mountain peaks. The stereotypical imagery associated with eastern France's Alpine foothills is as real as the local appetite for meat, cheese, and potatoes. It's understandable that the Jura, Bugey, and Savoie wine regions are often lumped in together since they are all part of the pastoral fever dream that flourishes around the Swiss border, but they are actually hours apart by car and have their own histories and identities.

The Jura is one of the most idiosyncratic wine regions in the world. It's known for pale, ethereal reds made from Poulsard and Trousseau; but even more so for the oxidative, nutty *vin jaune* made from the white Savagnin grape. And let's not forget the famous Comté cheese. The Jura's location off the main highways preserved its quirky traditions in the modern era. This has paid off in recent years, as these specialties have captured the attention of the global wine market. Indeed, the Jura was catnip to me, like any aspiring wine nerd. I still remember the first time I had Puffeney Arbois Rouge and Macle Château Chalon. The top wines of the Jura do not suffer much from comparison beside the top wines of Burgundy and Bordeaux; they are often even more distinct and cost way less. The limited availability of Jura wines doesn't hurt their status, either: the Jura is responsible for 0.2%

of wines produced in France. In the world of wine branding, as it were, Jura has a lot going for it. A clear identity, built-in demand, and a long history of quality.

Unlike the Jura — a more contiguous region which had a longer history of distinct wine styles that were known throughout France — the wines from Bugey and Savoie have typically been more diffuse and harder to categorize. This made them more vulnerable to the pressures of bureaucratic standardization that prized homogeneity over honoring the quirks of the many small, separate Alpine villages and communes that make up Bugey and Savoie. There's not even a long history of French identity: Savoie only became part of France in 1860. Before that it was a separate kingdom that included parts of Italy's Val d'Aosta and Piedmont, and later it was part of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

Today, Savoie is still shedding the perception that they primarily produce simple wines for ski holidays. They don't have a raw, irreverent traditional wine that makes you take notice, or an uncompromising 'I'll do it my own way' attitude like the denizens of the Jura are notorious for. Frankly, it's been difficult to find an angle or even a hot take on the wines of Bugey and Savoie. They have never been the loudest, most attention-grabbing wines. To sell them, I often use words like balanced, subtle, elegant, or understated. Many people interpret this as boring. Especially next to a funky Georgian orange wine or, of course, an unmistakable Jura wine. At their best, which I think we've represented this month, these wines are no less profound than their loud



Harvest at Domaine Berthollier in Chignin. Reclaiming steep vineyards has been crucial to revitalizing the wines of Savoie and leaving behind their image as simple wines for après-ski.

ABOVE PHOTO: DOMAINE BERTHOLLIER
FRONT COVER MAP: J. KEMP

and proud Jurassic cousins. They just require a bit more patience and a willingness to look closer. Open the wines, sit with them, let them quietly reveal secrets at their own pace.

One of the most diverse rosters of grape varieties in the world is in the French Alps, in part due to its long history as a crossroads for travelers. Over the centuries, visitors from faraway lands brought grapes and cuttings with them, and the many obscure varieties that exist in the area today are a big attraction for wine lovers. White grapes like Jacquère, Altesse, Bergeron (aka Roussanne) and red grapes like Mondeuse are included of the Savoie and Bugey appellation system, but many more are not part of the official record. Bugey, known mostly for its slightly sweet sparkling red wines (Bugey-Cerdon), got the worst of this. Historically it had lesser status than Savoie or Jura, and while

those regions were gaining appellation status in the mid 20th-century, Bugey was mostly planted with hybrid grapes that disqualified it from any fine wine classification at the time. In the 1970s officials thought that Altesse and Mondeuse were too hard and too inconsistent to grow, so Gamay and Chardonnay replaced them. Felt to be necessary to help struggling farmers, it is now seen by many as an unfortunate decision that made plantings of local varieties dwindle even further; though after a glass of Renardat-Fache's 100% Gamay 'Comme Dans La Cava à Mémé' (Press 4 Red) or Yves Duport's 'Celine' (Press 4 Mix/Red) which is mostly Gamay and Chardonnay with a little Mondeuse, you probably won't be that upset.

Luckily, myriad obscure Alpine varieties are being saved from extinction by one of the most fervent organizations of ampelography (the

study of grape varieties and classifications) anywhere, the Centre d'Ampélographie Alpine Pierre Galet, or CAAPG. They seek out cuttings from backyards, propagate them in experimental nurseries, and work to have them added to France's national grape registry. With any luck, grapes like Douce Noire, Onchette, Mècle, Blanc de Maurienne, and Rèze will be part of the conversation around Savoie wines in the near future.

All regions in France had to rebuild after the sequence of phylloxera (the insect blight that wiped out 75% of Europe's vines starting in the 1870s) and two World Wars. In the Jura, what was left was a concentration of the most committed and talented winemakers who stubbornly staked their livelihoods on the the quality and uniqueness of their wines. It was not an easy road. But in Bugey and Savoie, the struggle for survival was even more dire, and is part of the reason it took longer to garner international attention: you can't be making world class wines when you are trying to just feed your family. Luckily, in the 1950s they struck gold...white gold...snow, that is.

The Savoie is associated so strongly with winter sports it was surprising to me that it wasn't until the 1960s that winter tourism eclipsed summer tourism in the area. Following the lead of the Swiss, ski resorts were carved out of the mountains in a concerted effort by the French government to help the struggling Savoie. Already losing younger generations who were tired of the backbreaking work of Alpine farming, two World Wars depleted the population even further and put their traditions and culture on

the brink of extinction. The French government went as far as to introduce a national two-week school holiday in February for everyone to go skiing (of course they did). And it worked: soon restaurants and throngs of tourists were in need of local wine in large quantities.

However, this was a double-edged sword for the wines of the region. Given the economic distress and the rapid shifts afoot, there was not much opportunity to focus on top-tier wines. Until the 1970s, few farmers grew grapes exclusively, and most of them never made wine; they simply sold the fruit to cooperatives or negociants. Most had not been formally educated, let alone in the field of winemaking. Vines were replanted on flatter terrain, which allowed for tractors and easier vineyard work, but also exposed the vines to more frost, fungus, and diseases. Consultants and modern chemical treatments came to the rescue, quite literally given the precarious state of vineyards at the time, but it was not without long-term side effects. Once ski tourism came about, the focus was on quantity-over-quality. Grapes harvested in September had to be in bottle by December, not giving wines time to become anything more than après-ski afterthoughts. This reputation has been hard to shake, and many winemakers now refuse to sell to ski resorts in order to fight this and instead focus on burnishing their image to the world at large.

I've definitely noticed the shift over the past five years. Going back to the late-aughts, when I first heard about local varieties like Altesse, Jacquère, and especially Mondeuse, I was



Farming in the French Alps is full of challenges. The 2021 harvest at Renardat-Fache in Bugey was their worst in 25 years due to damage from frost, a rainy summer, and grapes being eaten by birds and wild boar.

hoping for another revelation like I had experienced with Jura. What I found were very friendly wines that were hard to dislike, but nothing that I found myself thinking about much. Now I consider Bugey and Savoie to be some of the most underrated wine regions around, as gentle on the wallet as the wines are easy to gulp down. The wines are as universally appealing as ever, probably more so than the Jura, but more producers seem unencumbered, ready to experiment, more committed to pushing quality higher and higher. The producers we've selected this month — Denis and Didier Berthollier, Yves Duport, Cellier de la Baraterie, Franck Peillot, Ferme de la Jeanne, Renardat Fache, Domaine des Ardoisières, and Adrien Berlioz — are all proudly fulfilling the promise that the region holds for great wine. There isn't one thing that has brought about a critical mass of producers that are so compelling. Reclaiming steeper vineyard sites, advocating for local grape varieties, embracing natural farming, and scaling back cellar interventions that make homogenous wines are among some of the things that have given the wines of Bugey and Savoie a bit more swagger recently. The timing is good. As the public turns away from souped-up macho wines and the climate keeps pushing alcohol levels higher, the lighter touch of wines from Bugey, Savoie, and Jura are perfectly positioned. The natural wine movement has made AOC status less important, enabling vigneronns to use more local varieties and experiment with styles.

The story of these three regions is all about the tension between what is needed to survive and what is needed

to thrive. I've focused more on the Savoie and Bugey here because their story feels more universal in some ways. The Jura is famous for being an outlier, and it is one of the best reminders that celebrating and fighting for what makes you different has many benefits. However, for most this is a complex conversation and a moving target. Too resistant to change and you risk going extinct. Too eager to eschew the old for the new and you risk losing the soul and character that makes people feel pride and connection. As always, our role as wine lovers is one that can directly tip the scales towards helping celebrate nuance, difference, and variety. As the public's enthusiasm for rustic funk reaches new highs (don't get me wrong, I'm all about it myself), I think it's more important than ever to go to bat for earnest, unassuming beauty. To be fair to the Jura, many of their best wines are also lithe, fine-tuned affairs as well. What all three regions excel at is mixing the weird with the pleasurable in ways that speak to tradition and history. But this is almost never at the expense of being simply delicious. Together they make up only 0.5% of the wine made in France, but when perusing any wine shop or restaurant list, it's a percentage that I am always ready to bet big on.

Santé,
Jonathan Kemp

For further reading, don't hesitate to pick up Wink Lorch's thoroughly terrific books 'Jura Wine' and 'Wines of the French Alps' which are the definitive texts on the region and which I relied upon for this month's writeup.



The Jura's international fame for celebrating idiosyncratic traditions like the above *Persée du Vin Jaune* procession was aided in no small part by winemakers like Henri Maire who codified and organized these customs starting in the 1940s and fought to keep production quality high.

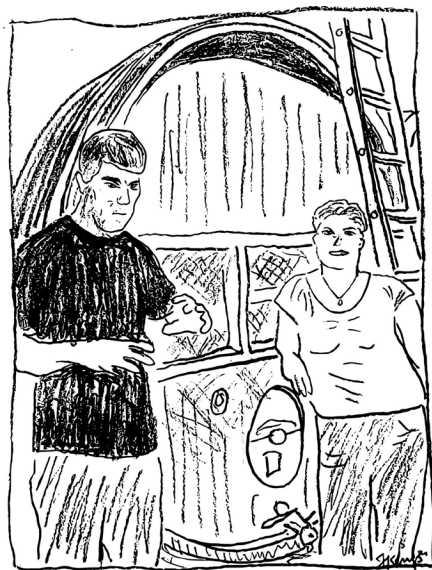
Denis & Didier Berthollier 'La Coulee de Proserpine' Chignin Bergeron 2020

Savoie • France
Press 4 Mix/White

Denis Berthollier always wanted to work in his family's vines, and when he started in earnest it was with an eye towards raising the bar. He did his internship work at Chateau Beaucastel, one of the most famous Chateaneuf-du-Pape producers, and thought that Savoie should be looking to the nearby Rhône for inspiration, where many looked to Bordeaux. Back at his family's winery, his ambitions in the cellar had to take a back seat to improving the vineyards, cutting yields, and reclaiming the steep sites that had historically produced the best wines. Luckily his brother Didier left his job as an engineer in Africa and came back to help with the vineyards in 1998, just before their father passed away. Today they have almost three hectares of crazy steep vines in addition to nine more hectares on gentler terrain. Everything is worked organically and sulfur additions are minimal.

It might be a surprise to some that Roussanne, known in Savoie as Bergeron, has a long history in the region, possibly back to the 11th century. I prefer Savoie Bergeron over Rhône Roussanne any day, and part of that is because the extra Alpine freshness adds a much needed lift to the variety. Along with Altesse, Bergeron is considered to be the Savoie's top white grape, and I would personally give the edge to Bergeron. This one from the Bertholliers is a fantastic example. Ripe golden

currant notes are mixed with a grassy Alpine freshness, bruised pear, essential oil, ginger, and cooling eucalyptus. There is texture, depth,



Damien & Anne-Laure Petit

and impressive balance here that speaks to the high standards that Denis and Didier have been upholding. It's a versatile wine with endless pairing possibilities, but I also love wines like this as an aperitif: it is an elegant way to kick things off.

Jonathan Kemp

Domaine Désiré Petit 'Cote de Caillot' Arbois Melon à Queue Rouge 2020

Jura • France
Press 4 Mix/White

There's nothing 'petit' about the passion — or the barrels — at this 3rd generation winery in Arbois-Pupillin now run by Damien and Anne-Laure Petit. The domaine was started in 1932 by Anne-Laure and Damien

Petit's grandfather Désiré Petit, who planted about 1.5 hectare in the Côte de Feule. Now the estate is 27 hectares, and was certified organic in 2019. Since 2008, Damien, who works the vineyard and makes the wine, has pushed more and more towards more natural viticulture and is also using Biodynamic preparations and methods in the vineyards. Organic fertilizers were abandoned four years ago in favor of soil aeration, herbs, and flowers.

To aid them in their efforts to work naturally in the cellar, they have some helpful friends and neighbors in Pupillin like Julien Mareschal of Domaine de la Borde; there's also the legendary Pierre Overnoy, who apparently instructed Damien to mix some Marc (grape brandy) with water to subdue some concerning fermentation issues in a barrel instead of using sulfur. Thanks, neighbor!

Their Melon-à-Queue-Rouge is a Jura subtype of Chardonnay with its own character. Though Jura is known for nutty oxidative wines at times, this is 'topped-up' or ouillé, aged in demi-muid, meaning it is made in a more typical style for white wine. That doesn't mean it is missing that special Jurassic something. There's some subtle Comté rind here along with notes of popcorn, lemon oil, and a silky texture.

Desire Petit is still one of the best values around and the wines get better every vintage. They are textbook examples, great for those who want to learn about the Jura; they will not disappoint long-time Jura fans, either. *Jonathan Kemp*

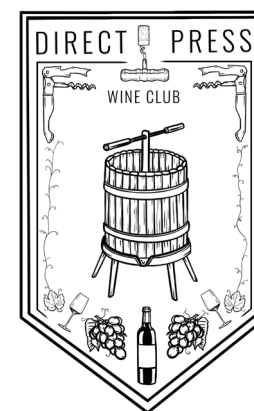
Yves Duport 'Celine' Vin de France 2021

Bugey • France
Press 4 Mix/Red

Yves Duport was born and bred Bugey; the Duport family originated from Vaux-en-Bugey, and Yves' grandfather began farming land (including vines) in the small town of Groslée in the 1930s. Taking inspiration from the vine-life, Yves studied wine in Macon and worked in sales for a wine

cooperative before joining up with some family members to buy grapes and build up a cellar for sparkling wine—mostly on a small scale. After some natural fluctuation in the family business, Yves started a new winemaking practice with his wife, Celine, in 2007. Since then, they've built up their domain to over 15 hectares, and have stayed loyal to biodynamic and organic practices the entire time.

This wine is made in his house style: natural fermentation, aged in stainless steel, with minimal sulfur added, creating a riper and more natural wine than many find in the region—though without any wild funk to it. We call it a



chilled red, but a rose lover would welcome it with open arms; the wine is rhubarb in color and ultimately is a still, quaffable summer juice that few would be mad at. The blend is 40% Chardonnay, 40% Gamay, and 20% Mondeuse, with notes of juicy cherry, tart red currant and a hint of an almost melted Jell-O or light Aperol feel to it. It's given a zippy freshness by some citrus rind, slight acidity and a touch of mint on the nose. In short: meet your new go-to summer wine.

Logan Davis



Julien Viana of Cellier de la Baraterie (above) won both a rugby championship and accolades for his first vintage, 2014, when he was barely 21 years-old.

Cellier de la Baraterie 'La Paroxysme' 2020
Combe de Savoie • France
Press 4 Mix/Red

Julien Viana, barely 30 years-old and not from a winemaking background, is bringing the proverbial 'youthful energy' to his wines and the vineyards he works. He took over a small vineyard when he was only 21 from Serge Bouchez, who didn't have any heirs. Now Julien has closer to nine hectares of vines that he works organically, with some in conversion, using biodynamic preparations. He is the perfect person to show off Savoie's inherent ability to make exciting natural wines.

'Paroxysme' is 45% Pinot Noir, 40% Gamay, and 10% Mondeuse, all done in steel tank. It's chewy and feral, with the darker Mondeuse coming through more than you'd think with some bloody iron, and red plum notes. Crunchy and punchy, this is an exuberant but detailed wine that could only come from the Savoie,

unafraid to be light, proud of its remunerative, mountain briskness.

Jonathan Kemp

Renardat Fache 'Comme Dans La Cave a Mémé' NV
Bugey • France
Press 4 Red

This fun and festive 100% Gamay is a new offering from Renardat Fache, who is more known for their swoon-worthy sparkling reds that come from the tiny Cerdon du Bugey village of Métrignat where the Renardarts have been vigneron for 7 generations. They farm 13 hectares of Gamay and Poulsard organically; now biodynamic-certified as of the 2022 vintage. The vineyards are located on high, rolling, wooded, and steep hills made of rocky clay-limestone soils.

'Comme Dans La Cave a Mémé' roughly translates to 'just like in Grandma's cellar,' which speaks to the simple, old-fashioned pleasure of this thirst-quenching heart-warmer. While tasting this wine I learned the story of the barrel on the label. The winemaker likes for you to climb in the foudrè with him through a tiny opening. Once inside you are treated to a few glasses of the wine from his cellar. Reminds me of the Bill Callahan lyric from From the Rivers to the Ocean: "Well, I can tell you about the river or we could just get in." This is that type of wine, a festive wine that wafts black cherry, black pepper and a hint of wax while that black cherry explodes on the palate followed by a slight menthol, peppery finish with ample acidity to make a great food pairing wine.

Jeremy Hernandez

La Ferme de Jeanne Pinot Noir 2021
Bugey • France
Press 4 Red

Much of Bugey's vineyard land was replanted in the second half of the 20th century with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Gamay instead of favoring local varieties that were considered too difficult and inconsistent, as Poulsard, Mondeuse, and Altesse were thought to be. It's not the worst news in terms of the region's ability to craft stupidly delicious, unpretentious wines, however.

Ferme de la Jeanne is a nine hectare operation that was started in 1981 and originally had a mix of vines, cereals, and fruits. The wines were only sold at local markets but had become so popular that Jacqueline and Yves Balsollier made wine the full-time focus of the farm. Now owned by Regis and Lynn Bernard, the estate is organic and in conversion to biodynamics. The wines are made by Nadège Allouch, and she is upholding the approach of humble country wines that overdeliver. This Pinot Noir is a subtle, light affair, but it is hugely satisfying. Ethereal with soft mineral texture and beautiful threads of umami, it is one you can chill down, and maybe one you save all for yourself. *Jonathan Kemp*

Franck Peillot Montagnieu Brut NV (2017)
Bugey • France
Press 4 White

Franck Peillot started working with his father in 1981 and took over the

family estate in 1985. He carries on as the fourth generation of winemakers at the estate. Peillot, known for his work with still wines from Altesse, chooses to invert the dominant grapes of most cru Montagnieu sparkling wines by making his wine from 50% Mondeuse and 50% Altesse + Chardonnay as opposed to the Chardonnay dominant wines usually found from the cru wines. This Champagne-method sparkler is not vintage-dated but Peillot's Brut is always single vintage, this one hailing from 2017. Average vine age here is around 30 years old with some plots reaching near 60 years old. They're also planted on a 50% incline.

Much of the Altesse is planted on rocky limestone scree on a steep slope near the village Montagnie and are trained individually in local traditional gobelet sur echalas style, which translates to goblet on poles, search for a photo on the web it's pretty whimsical. The Mondeuse comes from flatter, sandier, red clay soils downslope from town, close to the Rhone River. The different grapes are hand harvested and vinified separately, parcel by parcel. The clusters are direct-pressed and spontaneously fermented in tank, then the blending takes place in winter. The blended wine is bottled with a liquor di tirage (a solution of wine, sugar and yeast) and finishes fermentation in bottle then disgorged and finished with a 6 gram dosage. Although this wine is vinified as a white wine the Mondeuse shines through and offers up aromas of strawberries followed by vanilla and creme notes. The palate is bright and refreshing with a chalky minerality while the vanilla and cream are

echoed here giving a great lengthy finish. We don't always include bubbles in the wine club, but this one not only speaks to the history of the region but is honestly one of the best bottles of sparkling wine we've tasted, especially for the price. *Jeremy Hernandez*

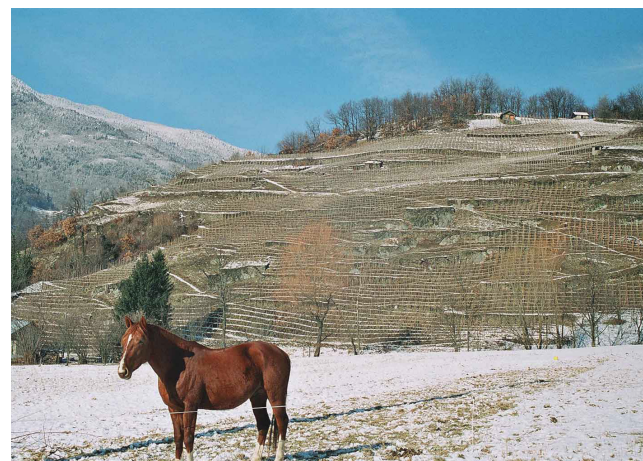
Ardoisières 'Cuvée Silice Blanc' St-Pierre d'Albigny 2021

Cevins • France
Press 4 White

This domaine has become a point of reference for Savoyard wines, and a darling of sommeliers throughout the city. Mont Blanc is the constant in this mountainous landscape, with the towering mountain keeping watch over this small estate near the Swiss border. The 17 acre vineyard has its roots traced back to Roman times, but it wasn't until 1998 that a group led by Michel Grisard began rebuilding the steep terraces that make up Domaine des Ardoisières today. Grisard is without question one of the most important figures in the rebuilding of Savoie wines, whether leading the CAAPG in its efforts to discover and cultivate near-extinct local grapes, or spearheading game-changing projects like Ardoisières. Despite the historic site and its international role as a beacon for the region, the vineyards were left out of the Savoie AOC and are classified as 'Vin des Allobroges' instead. Wine drinkers don't seem to mind, but it is a sad reminder of the failings of the local AOC system.

Grisard made the wines here until 2005, when Brice Omont took over. Omont manages to capture the vineyard terraces' stony and mineral

energy with clarity and elegance. The wine club has become such a fun open forum for this dynamic conversation between the classics and the avant-garde, with wines like this one serving as stellar examples of precision, character and complexity outside the boundaries of Burgundy. Silice is made with Jacquère planted on schist and clay, yielding a lifted and mineral white wine that is incredibly light on its feet for a wine with such persistence and texture.



Domaine des Ardoisières

Candied lemon zest, pickled ginger, salty peach skin, crushed stones, and a very mild floral suggestion that is complemented by a bracing acidic cut. Very few wines show their alpine roots so clearly as this one.

Bruno Sant'Anna and Jonathan Kemp

Adrien Berlioz 'Cuvée Euphrasie' Chignin Bergeron 2019

Savoie • France
Press 2

Located in the town of Arbin in Savoie, France at the foot of the Bauges Massif, Adrien Berlioz's

domaine has been certified organic since 2012 and biodynamic since 2020. All of his vineyard sites are farmed in the most natural means possible with no herbicides, chemical fertilizers, or other synthetic chemicals in either the vineyard or cellar.

Adrien's Euphrasie is 100% Roussanne from 30 year old vines from a lieu dit (named vineyard) called "Grand Buisson" which

translates to "Big Bush". The grapes are hand harvested and transported in small boxes to ensure the highest quality. This vineyard faces south-east on a 40% gradient and is planted to a high density of 8000 vines per hectare.

At the winery the grapes are directly pressed and the free run juice is fermented

naturally. The wine is then aged in 50% acacia barrels and 50% oak barrels. This wine has an annual production of only 2000 bottles.

If you've been in the shop lately you may have heard a running joke that I may or may not be starting a magazine for opulent white wines which are my current obsession. My working title is "Opulence/You Own Everything," based on a moment from RuPaul's *Drag Race*. Anyway, this wine would fit in quite nicely with that coterie of white wines that drink like a big hug or scratches the itch that comfort food seems to give us all

while being easy drinking and refreshing. This complexity of lees, cream, and overripe white peach aromas are complimented and reinforced on the palate with medium stone fruit acidity, parmesan rind, a touch of crème fraîche, and a bit of nuttiness reminiscent of Jura white wines. The 9 months in acacia also give just a slight touch of fresh wood and a hint of vanilla. *Jeremy Hernandez*

Le Caveau de Bacchus Arbois Trousseau 'Cuvée des Géologues' 2020

Jura • France

Press 2

The wines of Caveau de Bacchus were very much not available in the US until recently. They are widely regarded by other winemakers as having the best Trousseau vines, full stop. However, many decades of selling from their cellar door meant that 95% of the wines went to private clients. As they begin selling more internationally, we are very excited to be able to snatch these up before the secret is out.

Lucien Aviet (nicknamed 'Bacchus,' if that tells you anything about his personality) came from a farming family and after returning from the military he took over the family farm in the early 1960s and began making wine from their grapes instead of selling them to the cooperative. Over the years he built up a reputation for making some of the most age-worthy and classic expressions of the Jura's distinct varieties and styles. Despite his kinship with Overnoy, the wines are closer to Puffency in style and poise. Lucien died in 2018 but his son Vincent has been making the wines for a decade or more now, continuing the effort to make wines in a manner he and his father saw as authentic, traditional Jura.

They are not wild and 'natty' but they tell the story of the Jura, its history, and their unique vines in a way that is profound. And delicious. Authentic is a slippery term but I'm ok using that with the wines of Lucien and Vincent. If you want the real Jura, look no further.

The 'Cuvée des Géologues' is named for the geologists who helped the Aviet family decide where to plant Trousseau back in the 1960s. Destemmed and aged in large Alsatian foudrè, it is a young wine now and will easily age and improve over the next 5-10 years. Even so, you can enjoy it now, though decant if you can: it's not tannic, but more air will

allow the subtleties to emerge. There is a really lovely tightrope walk between the sultry, darker tones of wet earth and black cherry with the more elegant, fine-tuned details. Boysenberry and red pepper flake notes add an important lift and overtone series to the wine. There is a long, haunting finish and a quiet, firm voice to this wine that rewards really sitting with it and letting it tell you stories. *Jonathan Kemp*



Above: the late Lucien Aviet (photo by Mick Rock)

Back cover: Montbéliarde cows



DIRECT PRESS

MAY 2023