

DOMAINE
BELARGUS

*Grands crus, single-plots and monopoles
in Anjou (Loire Valley)*



PASSION

A dream come true. *Domaine Belargus is the realisation of a dream. Nothing predisposed Ivan Massonnat, happy in his day-job as an investor in Paris, to become a winegrower if not his passion for wine. It was born in the Savoie region, in his grandfather's vineyards and revealed in adulthood like a "madeleine de Proust".*

This passion has led him to travel the French vineyards for more than two decades, to attend the ON and OFF wine fairs and, gradually, to learn “glass in hand” the key notions of viticulture and oenology... Along the way , he developed some friendship with inspiring winegrowers.

This allowed him to multiply his experiences, to buy his first vines on the Moulin-à-Vent appellation, to nurture “Jeunes Pousses” winemakers with his friend Thibaut Liger-Belair, and even to start a wine adventure in Champagne... All this while dreaming of one day building his own estate.

Deeply inspired by his mentors, Ivan did not however idealise the world of wine and prepared himself for many years, multiplying exchanges with all the players in the sector: winegrowers, consultants, sommeliers, wine merchants, importers, journalists ... after such a long preparation, he was ready to take the plunge.

The Loire, of course

Ivan’s winelover journey was built on his passion for Burgundy wines: with its thousand-year-old heritage and the hierarchy of its mosaic of terroirs, Burgundy was the anchor of his fascination for “terroir wines”, capable of expressing an infinite variety of expressions from a single grape variety.

By rooting his family in Chinon in 2006, Ivan naturally set out to discover the two key grape varieties of the Loire. This enabled him to understand the potential of Chenin on the great Loire terroirs, forgotten by modern history and today recognised for their true value only by the microcosm of experts and great amateurs. Obviously, this Burgundian vision would therefore be applied... To the Loire.

For years, he was able to perfect his knowledge of the region by interacting with key Loire winegrowers, in search of a “diamond in the rough” ...

Love at first sight and alignment of the planets

The miracle occurred against all odds in Anjou, one morning in February 2018. Ivan was informed that Jo Pithon was about to retire. They got to know each other at the Salon des Vins de Loire. Appointment was made the next morning. And there, under the snow, at the bottom of the legendary Coteau des Treilles: “I had a feeling of obviousness. First an aesthetic shock, of course. And then, a magnificent story, that of Jo, who had an intuition for the place, patiently gathered 70 plots, cleared, regrouped and planted. It is his life’s greatest piece. It will be my fight to make this terroir shine, it being as extraordinary as the Coulée de Serrant, but in a peasant version.”

After this finding, Ivan felt that this nugget could not remain isolated and wanted to build a unique collection of Grands Crus, single-plots and monopoles on the schists of “Anjou Noir”.

Obviously, this Burgundian vision would be applied... To the Loire.

He then benefited from an incredible alignment of the planets. In a few months, in the spring of 2018, he was able to acquire “a quarter of Les Quarts”: 10 hectares in the historic heart of the Quarts-de-Chaume micro-appellation (40 hectares in total), the only Grand Cru in the whole Loire Valley. Then in the summer of 2018 he had the opportunity to set up in Savennières, notably buying the Clos des Ruchères at the bottom of Roche aux Moines.

Domaine Belargus was born, on its 24hectares entirely dedicated to the noble Chenin.

Its name was also obvious: Belargus is this pretty blue butterfly, historic inhabitant of the Coteau des Treilles. Unexpected in these latitudes, it embodies the beauty and fragility of Nature and transmits to the wines of the Domaine its elegance and liveliness.





After years spent looking for a “diamond in the rough”, it was love at first sight, one morning in February 2018 at the bottom of the mythical Coteau des Treilles.



TERROIR WINES

***The prism of the plot, on thousand-year-old terroirs.** The dark lands of Anjou Noir, more than 500 million years old, form the eastern boundary of the Armorican Massif. They result from a real geological chaos where a multitude of universes come together: purple, black or layered schists, pudding sandstone, magmatic rocks, rolled pebbles, fine clays and aeolian sands make up a palette of infinite complexity.*



Located in the heart of Anjou Noir, Domaine Belargus' mission is to highlight this mosaic of terroirs through a collection of single-plot cuvées.



This plurality of subsoils offers a striking diversity of terroirs where one can, for example, travel 70 million years in a single point of contact on the Coteau des Treilles. Located in the heart of Anjou Noir, Domaine Belargus' mission is to highlight this mosaic of terroirs through a collection of single-plot cuvées.

Belargus amat collis

Colline de l'Hermitage, Colline de Corton, Montagne de Reims, Coteau de Vernon, Monts Damnés, Rangen de Thann... So many evocative names to illustrate what Virgil wrote in 60 BC in his reference agricultural manual, Les Géorgiques: “Bacchus amat collis” (Bacchus loves hillsides).

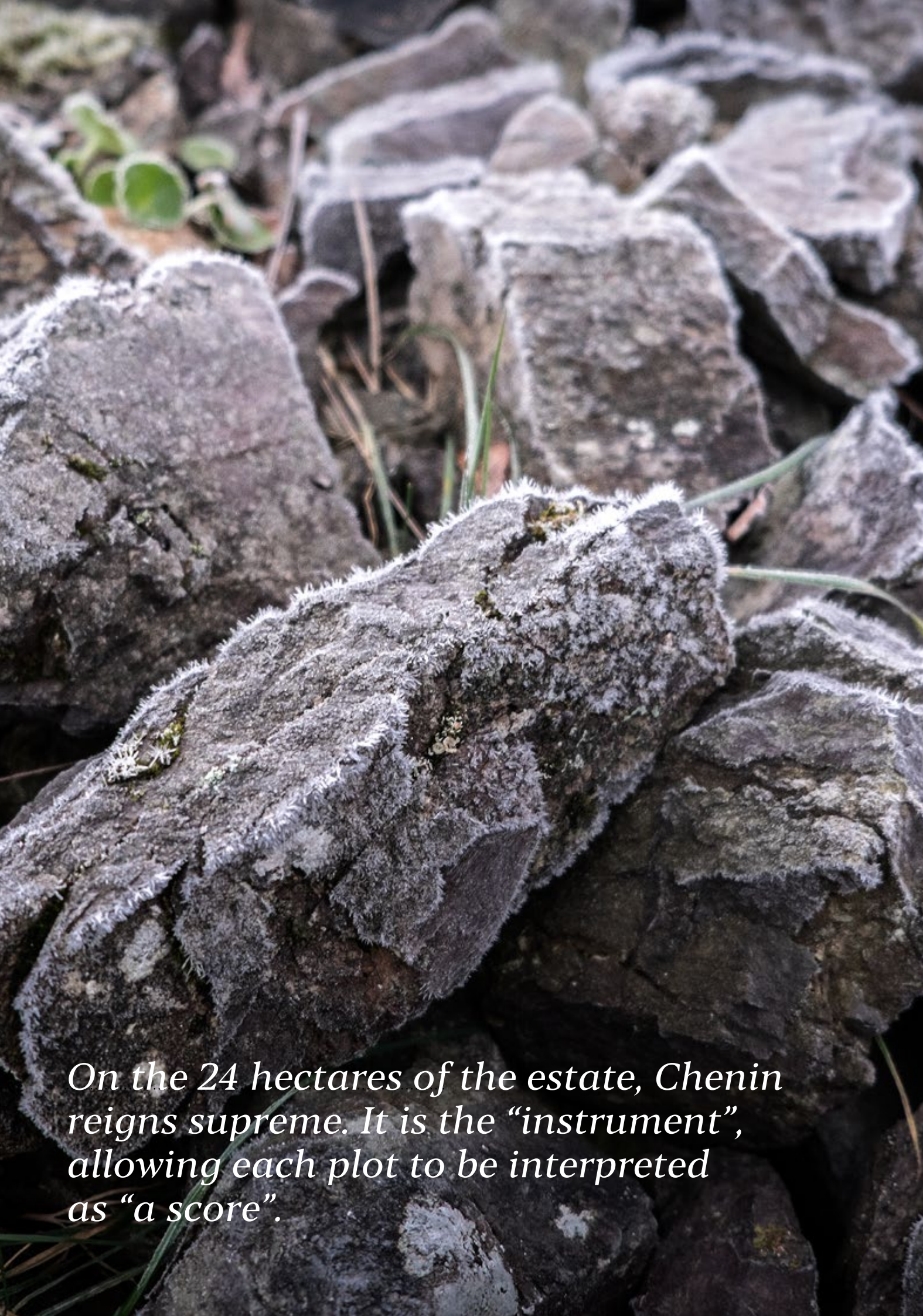
From the terraces of Clos des Ruchères, planted directly on the rock, to the vertiginous slopes of Coteau des Treilles, Belargus has chosen to establish itself on the most demanding Angevin terroirs: almost all located on hillsides, some are true examples of “heroic viticulture”.

Chenin as the sole instrument

In the 11th century, the hillsides of Anjou were planted with vines by religious orders. Chenin reigned supreme there (representing more than 80 % of the local grape varieties) and, until the 19th century, Anjou wines were served on royal tables across Europe. A demanding variety that is difficult to control over the years, it gradually fell into disuse (representing today less than 20 % of the local grape varieties) before starting to regain its letters of nobility c. twenty years ago.

On the 24 hectares of the estate, Chenin reigns supreme. It is the “instrument”, allowing each plot to be interpreted as “a score”.

A grape variety which is emblematic of an entire region, it expresses the specificities and richness of the Angevin terroirs. Not very aromatic, it is a true “terroir translator”, able to accurately interpret the subtleties of the plots from which it comes. It is also distinguished by its wide organoleptic palette, capable of producing wines of great complexity. Finally, it gives birth to wines, dry or sweet, benefiting from excellent aging potential.



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PRECISION

Accompany Nature at every step.

The 24 hectares of Domaine Belargus are currently being converted to biodynamics.

These precepts are applied to stimulate soil life and develop a harmonious ecosystem between the vine and its environment.

Following a precise maturity monitoring protocol, each plot is harvested at its optimum maturity, adapting to each vintage. The low yields (of around 25 hectolitres / hectare) result from the demanding terroirs of Domaine Belargus, mainly located on slopes with stony and poor soils, sometimes almost non-existent.

The winemaking is intended to be as natural as possible, with a minimum of human intervention. The process is always bespoke, as the work in the cellar can only accompany this magical phase of transformation: the fermentations take place in barrels, on indigenous yeasts, and can last from less than a month to more than a year, depending on each plot and the vintage characteristics.

Preserved landscapes

The landscapes of Anjou have been miraculously preserved. Contrary to a monoculture approach and the “oceans of vines” that can be seen elsewhere, Domaine Belargus strives to develop genuine biodiversity within its plots, with hedges, trees and cohabitation harmonious with the animal kingdom: bats and insects are thus seen as cultural aids, and sheep as an extension of the team during the winter period.

A credo, patient aging

Aware that this crucial phase is sometimes underestimated in the Loire, Ivan Massonnat wishes to offer the Chenins of Domaine Belargus an aging process worthy of their terroirs.

The Domaine thus ages wines from one to three years, with the aim of producing cuvées with long aging potential, capable of withstanding decades.

For a minimum of 13 months in barrels, the wines are aged on total lees, without stirring or racking. They are, however, the subject of constant surveillance and meticulous analyses. Maturing continues for up to 24 or 36 months, depending on the potential of each vintage. The fleet of containers is intentionally very diverse (228L, 400L barrels, demi-muids, ovoid or tapered casks, etc.) to provide complexity and depth after final assembly of the various containers.





GRANDS CRUS SINGLE-PLOTS & MONOPOLES

The terroirs of Belargus, nuggets of Anjou Noir. Nestled between the Loire and the Layon rivers, the vines of Domaine Belargus are spread over three main areas: Savennières, Quarts-de-Chaume and the Layon Valley. These three islets are themselves made up of unique terroirs, precisely defined by their exposure, their subsoil and their slope.

THE TERROIRS





*Anjou Noir landscapes, between the Loire
and Layon rivers.*



THE COLLECTION OF BELARGUS DRY WHITE WINES

The work of the Domaine is organised at the plot level, each terroir giving birth to a cuvée of dry white wine with a strong identity.



① ANJOU NOIR

AOC Anjou

It is a regional cuvée that provides the gateway to the Belargus universe. It results from a blend of the Domaine's vines not being vinified in single-plot, providing a synthesis of the terroirs that gave rise to it (schists, puddingstones, etc.). Produced for the first time in 2019, this emblematic cuvée of the Domaine benefits from a minimum aging of one year, in vats and barrels, and expresses the quintessence of Chenin on schist. As a tribute to its region of origin, it is simply called "Anjou Noir".

SAVENNIÈRES

② GAUDRETS

AOC Savennières

Coming from a set of plots located high up in the village of Savennières, on a plateau of aeolian sands and deep black schists, the "Gaudrets" cuvée embodies the typical profile of Savennières wines. This cuvée expresses aromas of white flowers and citrus fruits opening onto an enveloping palate, carried by a beautiful acidity and an iodine finish.

③ RUCHÈRES

AOC Savennières

Located at the bottom of La Roche-aux-Moines, the "Clos des Ruchères" (Monopole) rests on a slope of purple schists, covered with a very thin layer of soil of only twenty centimetres. This tiny steep plot, worked like a garden, gives birth to a wine carried by a great mineral tension. Two years of maturation give it length and aromatic complexity, as well as a significant aging potential.



QUARTS-DE-CHAUME

④ RONCERAY

AOC Anjou

This cuvée comes from a blend of all the plots of the Domaine on the Quarts-de-Chaume rump. Its name refers to the abbey of the same name, owner of the Chaume vineyards since the 11th century. A terroir with complex geology, the marriage of schists and pudding sandstone gives this cuvée a sharp minerality and a floral and fruity richness. A fine bitterness, signature of this terroir, brings complexity and length in the mouth.

⑤ QUARTS

AOC Anjou

"Les Quarts" is the original plot, facing south, which gave its name to the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation. As a matter of fact, until the French Revolution, the lords of Haute Guerche, tenants of the Chaume vineyards, used to pay the nuns of the Ronceray Abbey with "the best quarters of the harvest" ... The name "Quarts-de-Chaume" was born. The soils are based on Precambrian schists, which bring finesse and length to this legendary cuvée.

⑥ ROUÈRES

AOC Anjou

"Les Rouères" is one of the three plots listed in the original decree creating the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation, on the eastern side. The soils, thin and hot, rest on pudding sandstone (sand concretions and rolled gravel) accumulating the heat of the day and restoring it at night. This solar terroir gives birth to charming, ample and complex wines

⑦ VEAU

AOC Anjou

"Le Veau" is one of the three plots listed in the original decree creating the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation, on the western side. The plot rests on a flush schist area, giving this wine a mineral tension and great aging potential.

LAYON

8 BONNES BLANCHES

AOC Anjou

Located on a slight north-facing slope, the “Clos des Bonnes Blanches” rests on talcous schists, covered with clay and white quartz pebbles. This late terroir gives birth to delicate wines, prone to introspection. They reveal floral aromas and notes of menthol and fennel, carried by a great mineral tension. They are known for their great aging potential.

9 TREILLES

AOC Anjou

The “Coteau des Treilles” (Monopole) was resuscitated at the end of the 1990’s by Jo Python. Abandoned after the war because of its steep slopes (30 to 70%), this south-facing hillside is based on a true geological chaos (subsoils made up of magmatic rocks, schists, pudding and ancient limestones) which transmits its complexity and minerality to the wine. This plot is located in the heart of the Pont-Barré Natural Reserve, a haven of biodiversity that has never known chemistry and is home to exceptional flora and fauna, observed as early as the 18th century by Angevin botanists. This unique terroir gives life to singular wines which can be kept for a very long time. At the end of a three-year aging, they develop a rare aromatic intensity and express a telluric power with great tension, balance and energy.





THE BELARGUS

To complement this collection of dry white wines, the Domaine uses the magic of botrytis to produce a few cuvées of sweet wines. This of course, as in ancient times, only the years when Nature allows it...

LAYON

AOC Coteaux-du-Layon

This cuvée results from a blend of the Domaine's plots bordering the Layon. It is characterised by its balance and great freshness, carried by notes of fresh fruit and citrus. The palate, suave and enveloping, is supported by a tangy sensation.

ECHARDERIE

AOC Coteaux-du-Layon Chaume 1^{er} Cru

The Domaine's Chaume 1er Cru plots surround the place called "L'Echarderie", which until the French Revolution was the cellar of the lords of Haute-Guerche (exploiting the Chaume vineyards for the Ronceray Abbey). The marriage of schists and pudding sandstones in the subsoil gives this cuvée a mineral complexity and a long finish.

QUARTS

AOC Quarts-de-Chaume Grand Cru

"Les Quarts" is the original plot that gave its name to the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation. The magic of the Quarts-de-Chaume terroir (sunny hillside facing south, exposed to the morning mists of the Layon river and ventilated by constant winds) then operates... resulting in a botrytis of rare concentration. The schists in the subsoil give this cuvée a vertical structure and an elegant freshness.

ROUÈRES

AOC Quarts-de-Chaume Grand Cru

"Les Rouères" is one of the three plots listed in the original decree creating the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation, exposed on the eastern side. The puddingstones in the basement give a spherical and solar character to this cuvée.

ULTRA

AOC Quarts-de-Chaume Grand Cru

In 2018, an anthology vintage for sweet wines in Anjou, Domaine Belargus was also able to produce a barrel in tribute to the famous "Ambroisie" cuvée by Jo Pithon: an over-concentrated Quarts-de-Chaume (more than 30 degrees potential at harvest), referred to as "Ultra". This superlative wine, both a concentrate of energy and a model of balance, will leave an almost eternal trace of the first Belargus vintage ...



TEAM BELARGUS

It is with a communicative energy and in a “start-up” spirit that Ivan Massonnat has set up a young team (less than 30 years old on average), of ten passionate people in which parity is observed.

The Domaine's team is united by a passion for great wines. Ivan takes them every year to discover the great European vineyards: the “Wine Trips” rituals of Belargus have thus allowed the team to meet with the great winegrowers of Côte-Rôtie in 2018, Burgundy in 2019 and the German Moselle in 2020.

The young generation

The winemaker, Adrien Moreau, is the son of farmers from the Loire Valley. An agronomist and oenologist by training, Adrien is above all a sharp taster, crazy about fine wines, who discovered the wines of Jo Python while he was running the “Agro” Tasting Club. He has built his experience in elite houses in France (Cheval Blanc, Haut-Brion, Roederer) and in the new world (Harlan Estate). Sharing the same values, Adrien forms with Ivan and Jo an intergenerational trio united by the passion and the desire to discover.

On the vineyard side, the head of viticulture Amaury Chartier is the other pillar of the team. After leaving his native Champagne to be vineyard manager at Roc d'Anglade, he finally chose to take root in Anjou. His love of the vines, his commitment and his passion for “heroic viticulture” allow the Domaine to aim high, on very demanding terroirs.

The wise men

Fully involved in the Belargus venture, Jo Python continues to share with the team his winemaking experience and his intimate knowledge of the Anjou terroirs. His vision on organic farming and his perspective on the Angevin terroirs make Jo the main advisor of the Domaine.

The team also benefits from the benevolent support of Guy Bossard, a pioneer of biodynamics in France and former owner of Domaine de l'Ecu in Muscadet (certified organic since 1972).



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2020, year of the launch of Belargus

The 14 cuvées of Domaine Belargus (9 dry white wines and 5 sweet wines) leave the cellar little by little, to the rhythm of tasting. Only wines that are ready to be consumed are bottled and offered to the market.

Export represents today around 80% of the Domaine's sales, but Belargus aims to be solidly distributed in France, through a network of wine merchants (online or with a physical presence) and on the best restaurant tables.

The Domaine, which also wishes to create a strong bond with its consumers, is open by reservation for a discovery of the terroirs and a tasting on barrels. In the spirit of a “Club”, Domaine Belargus will also market certain micro-cuvées in direct allocation to amateurs.



THINK & ACT COLLECTIVELY

Ivan Massonnat, who typically says that he was “chosen by Anjou” (through love at first sight), wishes to contribute to the revival of this thousand-year-old wine region. He arrived with strong convictions and a positive energy just waiting to be expressed....



Paulée d'Anjou

In 2019, he was given the opportunity to do so by accepting the presidency of the Paulée d'Anjou, an event created in 2012 by the winemakers of Anjou Noir. With a mixture of daring and candour, Ivan helped create a new dynamic that literally transformed the event: extension to the “Anjou Blanc” winegrowers from Saumur, international guests, tasting day at the Coulée de Serrant, dinner produced by Michelin-starred chefs from Anjou, etc. The 2019 edition thus took on a truly international dimension bringing together, around the 53 participating winegrowers, more than 500 professionals from 15 countries.

In 2020, due to Covid, this Paulée could not take place. But the regional dynamic has gained momentum, with the symbolic reconstruction of the historic Province of Anjou: for the first time, the Paulée will welcome around twenty organic winegrowers from the Bourgueil and Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil appellations, bringing the number of winegrowers to nearly 90 this year.

Quarts-de-Chaume appellation syndicate

Ivan has also just been elected Co-President of the Quarts-de-Chaume appellation syndicate, in tandem with Marie Guégniard from Domaine de la Bergerie. With a completely renewed and rejuvenated office, he intends to stimulate a renewal of the one and only “Grand Cru” of the Loire Valley, and notably to promote the awareness of dry wines from this terroir.

The first initiative will consist of producing a collective cuvée, in both dry and sweet versions, co-produced by all the winegrowers of the Quarts-de-Chaume union. One barrel of each wine will be auctioned every year at a prestigious dinner.

Crédits photo

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