

BERGAMOT  WINE co

Grower Champagne Club

JUNE 2021

PINOT DOMINANT BLENDS WITH OPPOSING EXPRESSIONS

Pinot based wine from Ambonnay carries with it about as strong a reputation as there is possible in Champagne. If single vineyard bottlings from Krug, Marguet, Jacques Selosses and Egly-Ouriot are the hot tickets, the Aube is truly the other side of the Champagne tracks. It is as remote as it can get - roughly 80 miles way down south of the bigwigs in the Marne - often literally left off of the map and out of the conversation. In fact, the Aube is much closer to Chablis and shares its famous Kimmeridgian and Portlandian soils of limestone, clay and tiny fossilized seashells.

A hundred years ago the big guys tried to vote the Aube out of the Champagne appellation, but after years of violent protests they compromised by reserving the elite status of premier and grand cru exclusively for the Marne. This dispute is even more bitter considering the quiet little unknown secret that the Aube supplies much of the North with vast supplies of grapes.

This month we present two stellar Champagnes made from similar varietal blends but with very different results. One Aube, one Ambonnay, their individual styles are not solely dependent on their local terroir nor market expectations. Instead they are fabulous and unique creations that express the range of the growers healthy fruit as well as their individual thumbprints in the cellar.

GROWER CHAMPAGNE NO. 1

Rémi Leroy Brut Nature

Pinot Noir + Chardonnay

Aube, Champagne, France NV

GROWER:

Rémi Leroy grew up in Meurville, a small village in the Côte des Bar, where his family grew and sold all of their grapes to local negociants. He followed the family legacy, studied to be an oenologist, and worked as an agricultural engineer in Bordeaux before returning home to manage his family's 22 acre estate. Rémi farms organically and still sells most of his prestigious fruit to big Champagne houses in the North, but he now also vinifies about one-third of the estate fruit under his label.

He claims that Pinot Noir vines on his site are planted on the much harder Portlandian limestone, making wines that are forceful and weighty. He has a minimalist approach in the cellar to retain terroir and refrain from recipe-style winemaking. He ferments with native yeast in 85% stainless steel and the remainder in old oak barrels, with full malolactic and three years aging on lees. Rémi intends to someday use all of his grapes for the Leroy label, raising the Côte de Bar ever higher.

TASTING NOTES:

Aube the places you'll go! From confectionary decadence like lemon bars and crusty shortbread, to a whole slew of stone fruits like apriums, red plums, pluots and apricots. There is so much fruit here - even freshly squeezed blueberries. The texture is perfectly salted (like the finest fossil seashell) with rich and crunchy marcona almonds, a plate of saltines, and a bit of raw dough character like sourdough starter and fresh filo. There's such a dynamic interplay here between Pinot's red fruit, which shines through in a burst of hibiscus and goji berries, and Chardonnay's salty and stoney structure.

FINE DETAILS: 75% Pinot Noir 25% Chardonnay. Base wine is from 2017, disgorged 2020, dosage 4 g/L

GROWER CHAMPAGNE NO. 2

Andre Beaufort Brut Reserve

Pinot Noir + Chardonnay

Ambonnay, Champagne NV

GROWER:

The Beauforts have farmed organically since way back in 1971, inspired to change their farming practices after an illness Jacques Beaufort suffered in the '60's from using pesticides and herbicides in the vineyard. For fifty years they have used essential oils and homemade homeopathic preparations in their vines, and they avoid copper and other toxic sprays. Similarly, the Beauforts employ a non-interventionist winemaking approach in the cellar.

Both primary and bottle fermentations take place with native yeasts, and this natural methode process often results in slightly lower atmospheric pressure. Their base wines always go through malolactic, and SO₂ is used sparingly or not at all depending on the vintage. All of this hands-off winemaking leads to singular wines that can show variation from vintage to vintage and even bottle to bottle. Beaufort's Brut Reserve is a Grand Cru bottling made from 100% Ambonnay fruit and it typifies the house style.

TASTING NOTES:

It's pretty rare for us to recommend popping a champagne and enjoying it the day after opening, but this wine evolves into a completely different creature after *a little time open, and is worth the experiment. Freshly popped this wine is effusively aromatic, with moscato-like perfume, the heady herbs of a sweet vermouth, and even - dare we say - a splash of Sprite and Fanta?! The orange blossom perfume is wildly bright but it strikes a balance with the yeasty salinity hiding deep beneath those flowers. There's star fruit, juniper and gin, and even salty corn chips. Needless to say, this is one of the more wild Champagne rides out there!

*With a day open, the citrus wanes and the wine shows its mineral bones.

FINE DETAILS: 80% Pinot + 20% Chardonnay. Base wine is 2015 with reserve from 2013 and 2014