

Domaine du Closel

Profile



Chateau des Vaults in Savennières, which dates back to 1495, was inherited by Michèle de Jessey in 1962 from her childless aunt Madame du Closel. Michèle and Jacques de Jessey turned the small family estate into *Domaine du Closel*. The entire vineyard is located on the most western hill of Savennières and includes some of the best parcels in the AOC: *Les Caillardières* and *Clos du Papillon*. The topsoil is shallow, very warm and consists of purple/green schist and sandstone, enriched with volcanic rocks (quartz, phanites, rhyolites and spilites) in the best areas.

Evelyne de Pontbriand, Michèle and Jacques' daughter, took over the estate in 2001, after a first career of teaching French literature to adults all over the world. As a lover of botanics and nature, she quickly adopted organic viticulture, a process that continues to be a learning and experimental process to this day. She is constantly searching for the cultural practices best adapted to the austere terroirs of Savennières, and has deeply changed vinification practices in the cellar. Vinification is done very naturally and with indigenous yeasts. Sulfites are only added in tiny doses when needed. The wines are raised on lees from 12 to 26 months. The rhythm of fermentation is always respected.

Today the entire estate has been converted to organic and biodynamic practices in order to get a true expression of the different terroirs, which produce unique, original and delicious wines. With the help of a Belgian geologist Valerie Closset, all of her parcels have been inventoried and analysed to understand them better (this ultimately led to the each cuvée sharing the name of the parcel it came from). A lot of energy has recently been focused on understanding and dealing with fungal

illness in the vines. For esca, replacements are done in 2 phases: the first consists of planting the rootstock. About 2 years later, a "selection massale" of chenin is grafted from a healthy vine. New plantations are done with material from Lilian Berillon, the first and only organic nursery in the world. (<http://www.lilian-berillon.fr/>)

The other experimentation program has focused on pruning: the new plantations are pruned in gobelet, as in the old times, allowing the vine to grow bunches all around and have more exposure to sun and wind. Trained vines' foliage is now never thinned, or trimmed only trimmed in July. The growing branches are gently wrapped around the top wire. Evelyne believes that foliage thinning is a trauma for the vines, since leaves are the plant's vital organs, and has quickly noticed a change in the aromatic palette of the wines.

The third program is the soil cover. Different plants, such as cereals and clover, have been used as green fertilizers; the idea is to let indigenous vegetation grow in order to reestablish an authentic biodiversity in order to help fight insects and pests.

When not making delicious wines, Evelyne enjoys pairing her wines with her friend's cheeses, cooking the garden's vegetables and Loire fishes, reading, travelling to visit other vineyards, and promoting the AOC Savennières (which she presides).