Domaine du Closel

Profile

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Chateau des Vaults in Savennières dates back to 1495, and 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, phtanites, ryolites 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, which continues to be an experimental learning process. She is constantly searching for 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 best express the different terroirs, each producing 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 (which ultimately led to 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 pepinieriste in the world. (http://www.lilian-berillon.fr/)

The other experiments have focused on pruning: new plantations are pruned in the ancient style gobelet, allowing the vine to grow bunches all around and have more exposure to sun and wind. Instead of being cut, the growing branches are now gently wrapped around the top wire. Evelyne believes that foliage thinning is traumatic to the vines, as leaves are the plant's vital organs. She has quickly noticed a change in the aromatic palate of the wines. Much focus has also been dedicated to soil work. Different plants, such as cereals and cloves, 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 them with her friend's cheeses, cooking the garden's vegetables with Loire fishes, reading, travelling to visit other vineyards, and promoting the Savennières AOC (of which she is president).