

Jean Manciat

Profile

We know the Mâconnais well. Denyse Louis' family comes from this area, has vineyards with the coop in Lugny, and we own a home there. We knew the coop and négociant wines that dominate the Mâconnais and the American marketplace, but it was a 1986 Mâcon from a small artisan estate that was the revelation and the start to our search for comparable wines from other regions. We take special pride in our selections from the Mâconnais, our local wines.

Some of the coops produce millions and millions of bottles. Jean Manciat's vineyards can be toured on foot in a few minutes (5.5 hectares). When Manciat took over his family estate, he immediately left the coop in Charnay. He replanted extensively but kept as many of the old vines as possible. The yields average less than 50 hectoliters/hectare (the coops routinely harvest twice as much) and the picking is done by hand (a tradition totally lost around here except at the best Mâcon estates).

Manciat prunes his Chardonnay vines in the Côte d'Or fashion (*taille Guyot*), leaving a shorter cane that is less productive. The Mâconnais style of pruning is to bend a long cane into an arc, but Manciat finds the quality much higher with a shorter cane. Manciat is also experimenting with various agricultural techniques, such as sowing particular varieties of grass between rows, to eliminate the use of herbicides and alleviate soil erosion. He uses a type of old rootstock which he finds ideally suited to the chalky soil of the Mâconnais and replants with a mix of clones and grafts taken from old vines in the Pouilly-Fuissé area.

Manciat has a passion for wines fermented and aged in oak barrels, and uses a fair amount of new wood for his Vieilles Vignes cuvée and his miniscule production of Saint-Véran. But the Mâcon-Charnay Franclieu featured here is made in stainless-steel vats, to express the fruity, floral aromas and flinty minerality that characterize the best Chardonnay in the region.