

Domaine de la Pépière

Profile

When Marc Ollivier is *on*, these are the top wines of the AOC - wines that are not only delicious young, but that can also age 10, 20 or 30 years.

Ollivier's Muscadet-sur-Lie is the authentic item — it has lees contact until the time of bottling, generally in late May. This extended contact gives it the crispness that makes Muscadet so refreshing, and the classic wine match for seafood. It is the traditional way to make Muscadet, but has become the exception as growers and shippers rush to bottle "technically correct" wines by early January.

In this rush to bottle, Muscadet producers use special "starter" yeasts (which often also add flavors and aromas) to accelerate fermentation and enzymes or other techniques to finish the wine early. Sterile filtration is in rampant use.

Ollivier takes his time. He hand harvests (also a rarity in the region), uses natural yeasts, waits for the wine to finish and bottles with a very light filtration. The vineyards are in old vines (40 years and older) with a particularly good exposition on a plateau overlooking the river Sèvre. All the vineyards are from original stock: Ollivier is the only grower in the Muscadet who does not have a single *clonal selection* in his vineyards.

Ollivier also produces a very-old-vine cuvée of Muscadet from a single-plot vineyard in schist, the *Clos des Briords*. These are among the oldest vines in his estate (they were planted in 1930) and they enjoy a particularly good exposition. Also, when most of his estate's vines are planted on poor, shallow soil with hard granite very close to the surface, the Clos des Briords has a much deeper top soil of clay and silica over a brittle granite subsoil: this ensures excellent drainage in wet years, and better moisture retention in dry summers. Ripening is slower, and the longer hang-time before harvest allows for optimal maturity to be reached.

The vinification techniques are traditional for the area: no skin maceration but direct pressing within 2 hours of picking, racking of the must after 12 hours to remove the solid matter, and controlled temperatures, not to exceed 71.6 degrees F, for the fermentation. The aging of the wine, on its lees in stainless steel vats, lasts until bottling, about eight months later.



Because of the soil and greater concentration achieved with old vines, the Clos des Briords is a more powerful wine than most Muscadets. It is very mineral and quite austere in its youth, rather than fruity and light. Over a few months, or even years, if one can wait for it, it develops much complexity in aromatics and structure.

His latest cuvée, called *Eden*, comes from a vineyard he acquired from his neighbor. The soil is gneiss. The wine is lively with lovely floral notes.

As of late 2010, Domaine de la Pépière is run by Marc Ollivier and his new partner Rémi Branger. The two met when Marc purchased a considerable amount of Rémi's father's vines, ultimately leading to Marc hiring him because of the increased work load. After five years of hard work in the vines, Marc saw enough potential in Rémi to offer him the opportunity to become a part of the estate.



Remi Branger.