

Franck Peillot

Visits

This visit with Franck Peillot took place in June, 2013.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Maya Pedersen and Jules Dressner.

If you've hung out with Franck Peillot past midnight, you know him as a party animal. If you read the Wine Advocate, you might know him as the guy who made David Schildknecht say : "*I don't know any other grower as successful as he in revealing the noblesse d'Altesse.*" I know him simply as Franck, one of the nicest, funniest guys we work with. I present to you, KING FRANCK:



As you can see, it was a bit of a gloomy day when we visited, and like many other parts of Northern France, the weather has been shitty all year.

"Since March, we haven't had a single week of nice weather. It keeps raining and raining..."



Over our short walk to some nearby vines, Franck gave us a quick geography/history lesson. The village of Montagnieu (literally *moutain-y*) is located on the last bit of the Jura mountains.



It's quite serene and beautiful, surrounded by miles of uninterrupted nature. Except for the nuclear power plant built in the 70's.



It's never been used, and Franck thinks this might be the year they actually demolish it.

The Bugey finds itself in the middle of two distinct but neighboring regions, and Franck jokingly sums up the wines in simple mathematical terms: Jura soil + Savoie grapes = Bugey wine. This of course, is not true: Franck works principally with the Bugey's two indigenous varietals, Altesse and Mondeuse, which are grown on heavy clay and gravelly limestone soils.

Even though polyculture was always the Bugey's dominant agricultural model through the 50's, the region still had a strong focus on viticulture: the area used to be covered in over 20 000 hectares! Franck's father was the first Peillot to focus entirely on viticulture, only growing Altesse.

"He only made one wine, a 10,5%, dry, bubbly."

In 1981, Franck had started working with his father, taking over in 85. In his early days, he decided to get experimental and make a méthode champenoise Altesse. It didn't work, so he decided to plant Chardonnay. Over the years, Franck was able to acquire parcels of Mondeuse, an indigenous red grape, that produces its own cuvée and that he also blends into his sparkling Montagnieu. He also has a little bit of Pinot Noir, which is surprisingly glou-glou (I've opened four bottles of 2011 this summer...)

Franck's vines are among some of the steepest we'd see on the entire trip.





The vines we visited were on heavy clay.



The chalk rocks you see are only on the surface, and are very close to what is used for commercial

chalk. Franck proved it by breaking off a piece and writing my name on the road.

After our walk, we hopped into the Franck-mobile where he drove us to a few smaller parcels. Before heading back for dinner, Franck wanted to show us where he goes to escape from it all.





Though by no means religious, Franck still finds his peace here by the stream.

The 11's were tasting really good, and included a new, late-harvest Altesse. It was by no means sweet, and showed the subtlety and complexity to distinguish itself from the "normal" Altesse. We then ate a great dinner while tasting many back vintages of the whites, which were showing well. Eventually, it was time to hit the road, so we got back into the car at 1 AM and drove an hour and half back the the Mâconnais in a crazy rain storm.

P.S: The dog's name is Virgil.