

Alice et Olivier de Moor

Profile

Courgis is a small village 7 km southwest of Chablis where Alice and Olivier de Moor live and work. It is where Olivier grew up, and his "old" cellar, the part where he ages his Chablis in oak barrels, is underneath his grandparents' house. From the hill where Courgis sits, the view is of vineyards over hills all the way to the Chablis Grands Crus.

Olivier says the landscape has changed a lot in his lifetime, that all the woods, bushes and fallow land that dotted the hills have disappeared in favor of vines. There is a good side to this transformation", he says.

Alice is from the Jura, and the two met at a large Chablis estate where Olivier was in charge of the vineyards. Both are enologists, graduates of the Dijon enological school, with enough knowledge to take a radically different direction for their vines and wines than their neighbors.

They began their estate by planting three plots of Chablis, -Bel Air, Clardy and Rosette,-in 1989. Of their first harvest, in 1994, they kept only 15HL. They were still employed elsewhere, but quit that fall after leasing their Saint-Bris vines: 0.55HA of Aligoté planted in 1902, and 0.40HA of Sauvignon blanc from 1945. For the next three years, they worked their 4HA of vines, and in the vines of other winemakers to make a living. In 1996, they planted a large plot in Chitry (called Champagne) with Aligoté and Chardonnay.

The whole Chablis area is highly calcareous, with soils formed millions of years ago in a warm, shallow sea. So the limestone is rich in shellfish fossils like oysters (*exogyra virgula*), urchins, bivalves, ammonites. Bel Air and Clardy have a shallow topsoil over layers of harder limestone with fossils, a mix of clay and limestone that is highly draining, even more so in Clardy, which has whiter clay. Rosette has a more complex soil, and is much harder to work: its slope is up to 40% steep, and the vineyard can roughly be separated in two. The very top is eroded materials over hard Portlandian rock, the mid slope is directly over Kimmeridgian marl, and those quickly suffer from drought; the bottom part is rich, dense clay with some limestone, and ripens later: they usually do two harvests there, sometimes two weeks apart. They now consider Rosette their best plot, but it took almost ten years for them to believe in its potential and vinify it in barrels.

The St-Bris terroir is eroded debris over Portlandian rock. The clay is brown, the soil draining. The Sauvignon blanc plot has a north-west exposure, which lets the Sauvignon ripen slowly and get to optimal aromatic expression. This vineyard had 30% of its vines missing, and replacements were planted over 8 years, with local massale selection and cuttings of Sauvignon Gris from the Loire valley. In Chitry, the clay is also brown, over Kimmeridgian marls, and some silex stones are present.

The de Moor have worked their vines organically since 2005, a rarity in their area. The main improvements in their harvest work has been the transition, in 2002, from a large harvest bin to small boxes where the grapes are not crushed by their own weight. In 2007, they built a large and high-ceilinged winery, which allows them to do all their cellar work by gravity. In 2008, they purchased a second-hand pneumatic press, to treat the grapes in the gentlest way possible. There is no SO₂ used at harvest or during the vinification. Aging is done in burgundian barrels of different ages for the Chablis, and the Bourgogne Chitry. The young vines Aligoté is aged in cement and

stainless steel tanks, the VV Aligoté in barrels. The Sauvignon Blanc, which often takes over a year to ferment, is aged in tanks.

There are two bottlings of Chablis: Rosette and Bel Air & Clardy, the last a blend of the two plots. These have none of the "normal" under ripeness, or the gunpowder aromas created by an excess of sulfur. Olivier believes that in another era, Chablis had a buttery and nutty character, like any Chardonnay from low yields and reasonable ripeness. He follows the same reasoning for his Sauvignon de St-Bris, which is ripe and rich. The other cuvées are Bourgogne Aligoté VV, regular Aligoté, Bourgogne Chitry, and two special early cuvées that are done entirely without sulfur, Chablis 'Humeur du Temps' and 'A Ligoter' ("fit to be roped") Aligoté.