

The vine leaf of le Puy

EDITORIAL

PLUS PUR QUE DE L'EAU (Purer than Water) is the title of my book, which is a layman's explanation of wine. We all have good taste in wine, our taste is the best taste.

My book explains why everyone must feel free in their appreciation of the beverage we call wine. We each have our own perceptions and tastes. A certain number of wine gurus would like to dominate the field and impose their so-called knowledge. This is illusory; they do not share the same experiences and so do not have the same sensors, and above all, the same accumulation of olfactory information.

My book also takes a straightforward look at all the problems facing the humble wine-grower. A century or so ago, growing vine and making and maturing wine was an uncomplicated affair. The wine they made was good. Today, each wine must tick all the boxes of the INAO, the French wine-governing body, resulting in standardised, formatted wines.

I also share stories about my ancestors, insights into how they lived. I explain my vision of wine, which has a vital purpose; to contribute to the triggering and enhancement of happiness and to foster love, as one of the stories illustrates.

The book is published (in French) by Fayard, with a preface by Eric Asimov from *The New York Times*, one of the most renowned wine columnists of our time. It is now available in bookshops or on order.

I wish you much happiness and hope you enjoy the read.

Jean Pierre Amoreau

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A WINE-GROWING FAMILY

If you have already visited Le Puy, you know that there are several houses on the estate. More often than not, these were the labourers' homes. They were not necessarily employees as we understand the term today. It was another age, between the two wars and up to the 1960s. Vineyard employees worked 'to commission', in other words, they worked on the same vine area, for example four hectares, and throughout the year, they carried out all the necessary tasks on these vines. They began when they saw fit in the morning, stopped at midday and ended their day at sunset.

One evening, our grandmother told us the story of Helies and Germaine. She explained that, like all the labourers on the estate, a part of their wages was paid in wine.

"Helies was a good fellow, he had worked for us for many years. He was tall and strong with a decided air about him. His wife Germaine, a plump little woman, didn't work. She was happy to feed the chickens, the guinea fowl and the ducks, and drink the wine her husband had earned. She was a little too fond of that wine, from 11 o'clock in the morning on, she was a red as a cock's comb."

That vivid image stayed with me and I still use it when I tell stories to my children. My grandmother continued :

"Helies did not approve of his wife's behaviour and often yelled at her. More and more, he had to cook for himself when he arrived home, because Germaine couldn't sleep off her wine and cook at the same time. One day, Helies came home for lunch and found his wife drunk, yet again. He lost his temper and yelled at her, but his hunger won over. He decided to cook himself a chicken. He really wanted some chicken. He went to the henhouse, chose a white chicken, wrung its neck and set to plucking it. Once he had gutted the chicken, he placed it in a pot with some vegetables and put it on the stove. While he was waiting for it to cook, he prepared his gun to go hunting woodcock the following Sunday. When the chicken was cooked, Helies sat down to eat. The whole operation took him two hours. His wife had watched him prepare his chicken, all the while hoping to eat a little too. Helies sat at one end of the table. He ate with relish, cutting up the chicken with his pocket knife. Germaine, seated at the other end of the table, a glass of red in her hand, watched him without asking for her share. She knew that when her husband was angry, she had to keep a very low profile. The atmosphere was heavy.

The only sound you could hear was Helies crunching on the cartilage. He had no qualms about eating a whole chicken for lunch. Half-way through his feast, he tore off a leg from the carcass and tossed like a bowling ball across the table to Germaine. "Here woman, eat", he said in his local dialect. The greasy leg slid easily across the table to his wife, who nimbly grabbed her prey and started to devour it hungrily. His belly full, Helies went back to work and his wife took a nap without washing the dishes. Her husband would have to do it if he wanted to eat that evening."

I never understood how my grandmother could know so much about other people's lives, but it didn't really matter, I just loved hearing her stories.

Valérie Amoreau
In our next edition

ÉMILIE 2016 VINTAGE ORGANOLEPTIC SHEET

TASTING

The 2016 vintage has a fine, deep garnet colour with hints of purple.
It offers an intense nose with clearly dominant black fruit.
Émilie 2016 has a fleshy palate, silky yet crispy.
An overall elegance with a very well-balanced tannin structure.
This is a highly-structured wine.

ANALYSIS

Alcoholic volume	13.37	% vol
Sugars (Glucose/Fructose)	non-quantifiable	
Total acidity	3.97	g/l
Volatile acidity	0.6	g/l
PH	3.28	
Free sulphur dioxide	non-quantifiable	
Total sulphur dioxide	27	mg/l

YIELD

56 hectolitres/hectare

A vintage, a story... Émilie 2016

2016, a year of balance

While it was not much warmer than other years (2011, 2014 or 2015, for example), 2016 was nevertheless a year of plentiful sunshine, more particularly from June onwards. It has to be said that the year got off to an unpleasant start, with a particularly wet January and several heavy storms affecting other regions (hail and late frosts, notably).

Fortunately, with rainfall gradually decreasing over the months, leading to one of the driest months of August and December in the last fifty years, we had no problems with diseases. We thus harvested full, healthy grapes and actually registered one of our highest volumes ever!

With more than 50 hectolitres per hectare, this outstanding harvest disproved a commonly-held scepticism that organic wine-growing necessarily produces lower yields. At the time, we observed 'magnificent' grapes that promised a great vintage, on a par with that of 1990 or 2010, which had also yielded high volumes.

Émilie 2016 is therefore a superb le Puy, which can be enjoyed young thanks to its freshness and simplicity, but whose excellent structure will also allow it to age serenely for years to come in your cellar!



OENOLOGY

LONG-KEEPING WINE : this is a wine which is capable of ageing over time and 'ageing well', enhancing its qualities over the years. It can generally be kept for 3, 5, or 10 years, even more for very long-keeping wines (more than 20 years). It is usually powerful with a stable structure, but may sometimes present a form of greenness if drunk too soon. On the other hand, we can speak of 'quaffing wines' that can be drunk straight away, thanks to their high digestibility, freshness and thirst-quenching appeal. At le Puy, we have been told that our wines can 'seem young when they're old, and old when they're young'. The best of both worlds !

Vintage	Temperature amplitude 16°	Temperature amplitude 10°	Temperature amplitude 6°
1917	collection	collection	can age
1926	collection	collection	can age
1932	collection	collection	can age
1955	collection	collection	drink now
1959	collection	collection	good to drink now
1961	collection	drink now	can age
1970	collection	drink now	can age
1975	collection	already drunk	good to drink now
1978	already drunk	already drunk	good to drink now
1982	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1984	collection	already drunk	drink now
1985	already drunk	already drunk	good to drink now
1986	already drunk	already drunk	good to drink now
1988	drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
1989	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1990	drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
1991	collection	already drunk	good to drink now
1994	drink now	good to drink now	drink now
1994 Barthélemy	good to drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1995 Emilien	good to drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1995 Barthélemy	good to drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1996 Emilien	drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
1998 Emilien	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
1998 Barthélemy	good to drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
2000 Emilien	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2000 Barthélemy	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2001 Emilien	drink now	drink now	drink now
2001 Barthélemy	drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
2003 Emilien	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2003 Barthélemy	drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2004 Emilien	drink now	drink now	good to drink now
2004 Barthélemy	good to drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
2005 Emilien	good to drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2005 Barthélemy	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2006 Emilien	good to drink now	good to drink now	leave to age
2006 Barthélemy	good to drink now	drink now	leave to age
2007 Emilien	drink now	drink now	good to drink now
2007 Barthélemy	drink now	drink now	good to drink now
2008 Emilien	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2008 Barthélemy	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2009 Emilien	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2009 Barthélemy	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2010 Emilien	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2010 Barthélemy	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2011 Emilien	good to drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
2011 Barthélemy	can wait	good to drink now	leave to age
2012 Emilien	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2012 Barthélemy	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2013 Emilien	good to drink now	good to drink now	good to drink now
2014 Emilien	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2014 Barthélemy	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2015 Emilien	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2016 Emilien	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2016 Barthélemy	good to drink now	leave to age	leave to age
2017 Emilien	can wait	leave to age	leave to age
2017 Barthélemy	can wait	leave to age	leave to age

SHOULD YOU DRINK OR KEEP YOUR LE PUY?

Collection : An over-developed wine, whose colour matter has settled at over 50% and which has consumed more than 40% of its alcohol volume. This is most probably a collection bottle to be contemplated with a mixture of nostalgia and pleasure.

Already drunk : this is a wine at the end of its life, which should be drunk rapidly, if not already: it is a wine which may disappoint if kept too long. Older vintages must be decanted before serving.

Drink now : a wine which is maturing and should be drunk to enjoy all its flavours and qualities. Older vintages must be decanted before serving.

Good to drink now : a full-bodied, stable wine, at its best, given its age. From the 2005 vintages on, decant to release all the flavours.

Can age : an old wine which is 'good to drink' but can also be kept a little longer depending on the cork. Do not hesitate to change the cork.

Can wait : recently bottled wines. Very young tannins that need to fill out. May be drunk straight away but only after sufficient airing.

Leave to age : wine which will benefit from ageing, to fill out its tannins and enhance the full bouquet of its flavours. Wine which will gain in sophistication. A shame to drink before it has had the chance to fully express itself. For young wines, it is a hopeful sign of great longevity.

These recommendations are from the modest view of our palates, the specificities of each cellar may influence the ageing of vintages. They are the result of our recent family tasting sessions involving two generations of the Amoreau family, Jean Pierre and Pascal.

All Barthélemy vintages are to be decanted.

The amplitude in temperature is the difference between the maximum summer temperature and minimum winter temperature of the cellar. The information above applies to cellars with a minimum temperature of 3°C in winter or 25°C maximum in summer.

ORGANIC FARMING IN FRANCE

The notion of 'organic' farming, an agricultural system employing prevention and management techniques which respect the balance of nature, emerged in the 1920s and was first developed in Germany, Austria, Britain and Switzerland, based on research carried out by Rudolf Steiner, Albert Howard and Hans Peter Rusch.

- 1932 : the creation of Demeter, the emergence of the first biodynamic agricultural estate in Alsace.
- 1948 : the creation of the organisation L'Homme et le Sol (Man and the Soil), by the agro-biologist André Birre and biologist and horticultural engineer Jean Boucher, to promote the use of humus and to fight against the excessive use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.
- 1958 : Jean Boucher and Raoul Lemaire developed a new working method advocating soil fertility, by activating microbial life via 4 techniques: intense loosening of soil without ploughing, the composting of organic manure, plant combinations and lithothamnium from Brittany (a marine algae rich in calcium, magnesium and oligo-elements).
- 1959 : André Birre, André Louis and Mattéo Tavera founded an organic farming group in west France, which would become Nature & Progrès in 1964, in order to differentiate from the work of Jean Boucher and Raoul Lemaire.

- 1970 : the notion of a production and inspection specifications brief emerged, in order to guarantee a certain level of quality for consumers.
- 1972 : Nature & Progrès adopted the first French specifications brief and became a reference in the sector.
- From 1972 to 1991: the French movement began to splinter. More than ten organisations and associations were created, each with its own specifications brief. This resulted in a somewhat blurred and marginal image of organics.
- 1978 : the establishment of the FNAB, the 1st professional federation, whose aim was to rally and unify the organic farming approach in its dealings with national and international bodies.

- 1980 : public authorities recognised the existence of a form of 'agriculture using neither chemical products nor synthetic pesticides' via an organic farming law.
- 1985 : official recognition of this new farming method and national certification of specifications briefs granting the use of the AB logo was established.
- 1991: a European law was adopted, based on the French text, and the 1st independent certification body was founded.

Since the inter-war period, successive generations of the Amoreau family have refused the use of chemical products, thus making the family a pioneer of organics in France. Numerous labels exist today, with new appellations emerging in the wine marketing landscape. There is only one reality, however, working without additives, neither in the vines, nor the wines. This is how Le Puy has always worked and hopes to continue.

Pascal Amoreau

FIELD SELECTION OR 'SELECTION MASSALE'

Vines, like any other element on this planet, live and die. Over the years, all wine-growers need to replace their vine plants.

The simplest method is to buy cloned selections from a nursery. That is to say, young plants which have been produced through rigorous selection for a homogeneous result. The downside to this method is that it reduces genetic diversity, as strains which do not correspond to the selection criteria are eliminated from the process.

These means that wine-growers choose the most productive plants to the detriment of grape and thus wine quality. Le Puy has opted for *sélection massale*. This means that instead of buying plants, we graft vine shoots taken from more than 50 year-old plants on our own estate, so well before the arrival of cloning. These shoots are then multiplied and replanted. This enables us to preserve our vine heritage.

Our wines are therefore unique and testify to the history of le Puy. It takes at least two years to obtain the plants that will enrich our vineyard. This method, known as *sélection massale*, is an ancestral technique which, unlike clonal selection, focuses more on the quality of the fruit and the respect for our terroir identity.

It does, however, require vigilance as to the threat of certain diseases such as viruses, but is not the task of a wine-grower to take care of his vines ?

Steven Hewinson

WHERE SHALL WE DINE TONIGHT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC?

Alcron

Chef Roman Paulus - Michelin recommended- Štěpánská 40, Prague (420) 222 820 410

Aromi

Chef Riccardo Lucque - Michelin recommended- Náměstí Míru 6, Prague (420) 222 713 222

La Degustation

Chef Oldřich Sahajdák - Michelin recommended- Haštalská 18, Prague (420) 202 222 311 234

La Finestra

Chef Riccardo Lucque - Michelin recommended - 13, Platněřská 90, Staré Město, Prague - (420) 222 325 325

La Veranda

Chef Radek David - Michelin recommended- Elišky Krásnohorské 2, Prague (420) 224 814 733

Pot-au-feu

Chef Jan Kracik - Michelin recommended- Rybná 1065/1065/13, Prague (420) 739 654 884

These chefs, among many others, have honoured us by choosing le Puy to accompany their refined dishes.

DELIGHTS FOR THE PALATE

Red butter sauce - Émilien 2016

for 6 persons

- 6 large shallots
- 50cl of Émilien 2016
- 25cl of veal or chicken stock, preferably homemade
- 120g of cold butter
- Thyme, bay leaf, whole peppercorns, salt

Peel and chop the shallots. Place them in a pan with the wine, thyme, bay leaf and 5 to 6 lightly crushed peppercorns. Bring to the boil and keep on a full heat for two minutes. Lower the heat and leave the sauce to thicken until there is very little liquid left. Add the veal or chicken stock and leave to thicken for about another 10 minutes. Filter the sauce with a strainer and pour into a smaller pan. Gradually add the cold butter in small knobs, while stirring vigorously on a medium heat. The sauce will gradually become creamier. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately with meat or white fish.

Valérie Amoreau

vine leaf of le Puy - The vine leaf of le Puy - The vine leaf of le Puy - The vine leaf of le Puy