

Decanter PANEL TASTING

Pouilly-Fuissé 2009

Unlike elsewhere in Burgundy, there is no hierarchy in the Chardonnays of this Mâconnais sub-region. But, says Denise Diesen, terroir and producer are still key

FORGET LOADING 'POUILLY-FUISSÉ' into your GPS – it's not a village in itself, but a sub-region of southern Burgundy, lying west of Mâcon. The name of this Chardonnay wine derives from the villages of Fuissé and Solutré-Pouilly, and is not to be confused with the Loire's Sauvignon Blanc wine of Pouilly-Fumé...

The Mâconnais measures 35km from north to south, from Tournus to St-Vérand on the border of Beaujolais, with Pouilly-Fuissé its most recognised and celebrated wine.

Pouilly-Fuissé covers about 757 hectares out of the 5,600ha in the Mâconnais. The vines thrive on rich clay and limestone soil over a hard granite base. The limestone escarpment of the prehistoric Roche de Solutré, a designated Great Site of France, and the smaller hill of Vergisson, dominate the landscape and tower over the vineyards below. As early as the 11th century, the monks of Cluny recognised that the rich fossilised sediment provided fertile ground for their viticultural pursuits.

Aiming high

Unlike neighbouring regions to the north in the Côte d'Or, there is no premier cru hierarchy in the Mâconnais, as vigneron had not applied for this designation after the establishment of the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AC), created in 1936. Hence quality is more focused on the reputation of the individual winemakers, négociants and their respective plots and specific characteristics.

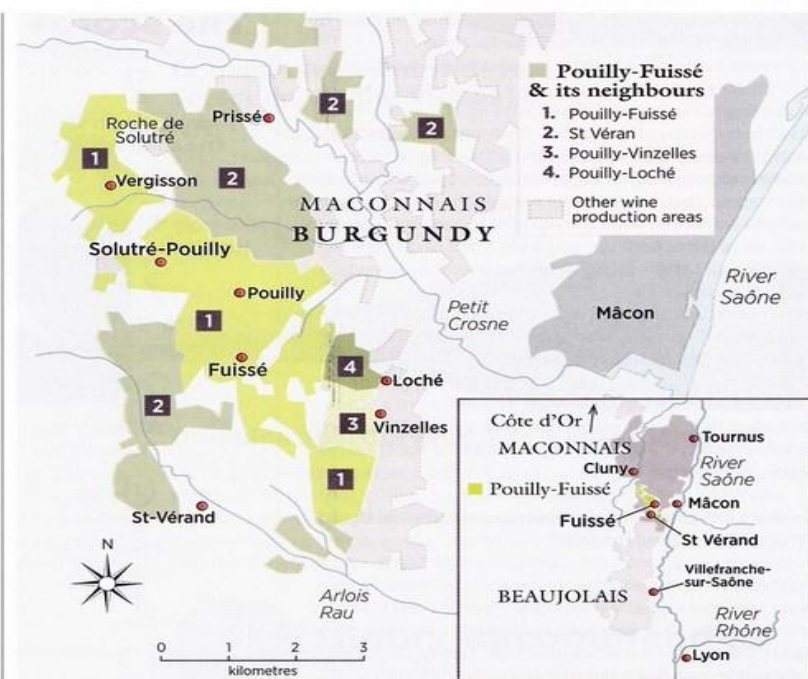
The Mâconnais has suffered in the past from excessive yields, early harvests and dominant coops. But efforts by a new generation of dedicated, curious and hardworking winemakers are showing positive results. In March 2010, Pouilly-Fuissé, St-Vérand, Pouilly-Vinzelles and Pouilly-Loché requested village/premier cru designations; Pouilly-Fuissé had been studied for the past three years to detect outstanding *lieu-dits* (named sites) for potential premier cru consideration. The route to a final decision by French appellations board the INAO is a long and circuitous one, but underscores the belief in the terroirs and their guardians.

Complex and ageworthy

Where there are many wines of the Mâconnais which offer pleasant, less-structured refreshment, the wines of Pouilly-Fuissé tend to boast more complexity and need more bottle age to reveal their individual characteristics. In general, the bigger and denser wines come from the area of Fuissé, with deep clay soils that sit on a slope oriented toward the south. More mineral, taut wines are made from grapes around Solutré-Pouilly, where limestone and marl are more prominent. These tend to be used in blending rather than bottled separately. The rocky, fossilised limestone hill of Vergisson produces racy, mineral wines on the slope, while the vineyards at the summit need more time to ripen. Here, warmer climatic trends are a benefit.

Wines from Pouilly-Fuissé benefit from about five years in bottle before consumption and in the more successful vintages, when interpreted by talented winemakers, they can have a long life of some 20 years.

Denise Diesen has worked in wine for 23 years. She is based in Beaujolais and creates fine wine cellars for private clients



Pouilly-Fuissé: the facts

757ha under vine
39,147hl of white wine produced, which equals
5,200,000 bottles

Pouilly-Fuissé: know your vintages

2009 Wines to enjoy in youth – built on fruit not acidity. Warm and sunny growing season gave healthy grapes with lower acidities. Dense but not as tightly compact as 2005. Drink from 2013.

2008 Rain in May and June, hail in early August then a sunny, dry September. Dense fruit with balanced minerality. Drink from 2014.

2007 A warm spring but the cool, grey days of summer slowed maturity. A strong north wind and sunshine that continued from late August through September saved the

vintage. Pure fruit with firm minerality. Classic vintage. Drink from 2012.

2006 A snowy winter was followed by a warm, early summer and rainy August. Rapid maturation lent a very ripe, slight exotic fruit aspect for early drinking. Drink now.

2005 An acclaimed vintage all over France thanks to ideal warm weather, although August was more overcast and fresh. Healthy grapes gave rich, full bodied wines with a racy finish. Drink the '06s now and leave '05s for a few more years.

Domaine de la Feuillarde

3 Star Wines – Recommended

Pouilly-Fuissé Tradition 2009

Score : 15.33/20

Tasting Note : Oaky on the nose but fruit comes through behind. Intense. An atypical example with bubblegum notes and low acidity, but has a long finish – good aftertastes .

Drink: 2011-2013