

France-Loire



Domaine Jean-Claude Chatelain Pouilly-Fume White

Forthright, direct, opinionated, perhaps even a bit Napoleonic in nature, Jean-Claude Chatelain presides over his 20-hectare domaine; he is the eleventh generation producing wines on the hillsides near Pouilly-sur-Loire since 1630. Traditionalist by philosophy yet modernist in technique, he maintains that “true” Pouilly-Fumé must come from the combination of soils, the blend of terroirs unique to the appellation: chalky, limestone-clay dominated Kimmeridgean marls with stony, flint-laden silex sands.

Mocking some of his neighbors who are producing terroir specific cuvées named “Silex,” “Pur Sang,” or “en Chailloux,” Chatelain would rather produce wine expressing the nuances of both types of soil: the delicate mineral aromas and flavors of stone, smoke, and gunpowder from silex, and the rich, intense, citrus-driven smells and tastes from heavier Kimmeridgean clays. For Chatelain, Pouilly-Fumé is precocious, elegant, perfumed, yet also intense and aromatically complex, with a structure and richness capable of considerable aging.

Working with 100% Sauvignon Blanc from low-yielding, older vines (average age is 40 years), Chatelain differentiates his cuvées with the judicious use of oak barrels for the fermentation and aging of some of his wines, while fermenting the majority in stainless steel tanks.

Since the 1996 vintage, Chatelain has also been experimenting with a small plot of vines he rents in Sancerre. However, he is not trying to reproduce Pouilly in foreign soils: his Sancerre is effusive, flirtatious, and quaffable, a fruit-driven bistro-style pleaser that is sheer fun to drink.

Varietals:

Sauvignon Blanc

Wine Description:

Clear light yellow. Quite restrained, but with an impressive emerging complexity, sweet, almost confit nuances of white fruit, intermingled with earthy minerals and a distant whiff of smoke, very well balanced, not impressive in the sense of fruit or intensity, but showing great depth and class in a restrained way. Not an easy wine to appreciate: less opulent fruity than most, with strong terroir (earthy and smoky) based expression.

Quite powerful, rich, but also compact and very restrained aromas, with strong acidity and many mineral and earthy nuances, some white fruit, a touch of confit and a distant impression of smoke (flint), many nuances, but still good developing potential, Very good balance. Very long, intense, with strong acidity, some minerals and earthy nuances. Very clean and well balanced.

Vignification Process:

Stainless Steel vats, temperature controlled

Food Pairing:

Scallop, seafood, good cheese.

