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Domaine Chanson

A YOUNG TEAM MAKES ITS MARK

There are some exciting things happening at Domaine Chanson, which is curtailing négociant operations to focus entirely on its own vineyards. Last year, with that goal in mind, the company more than doubled its then 106 acres of vineyards with the purchase of a Côte Chalonnaise estate totaling 123.5 acres in Mercurey and Rully.

“The négociant business is tough,” explains Chanson managing director Vincent Avenel. “Yields have been low, there is high demand and prices are high.” The demand he refers to comes from competition among houses for grapes, juice, must and wine.

Avenel succeeded Gilles de Courcel in 2017, after stints at Bouchard Père & Fils and Domaine Faiveley. Its domaine wines were only 25% of Chanson’s business, thus the new purchase. Nevertheless, the company’s focus today is on 50 appellations, down from 119 a few years ago.

In addition to Avenel, there is a new team in place at Chanson. Vineyard manager Justine Savoye, who had an internship at Chanson in 2016, arrived full time in 2019; Lucy Auger, the cellar master, joined one year later. Under Avenel’s direction, they have tweaked a few things in the vineyards as well as with the vinifications and aging process. “Our goal is wines that give pleasure,” says Avenel. “We want people to discover our wines and share them with their friends.”

In the vineyards, Savoye is aiming to increase the proportion of organic material in the soil. She is also leaving a few more buds during pruning to increase yields—from 1.4 tons per acre to 2 to 2.3 tons per acre.

“If we are impacted by bad weather, it can be a big problem,” she says, referring to challenges such as the frost in 2021.

Chanson used to be one of the latest to pick in each vintage, as many as two weeks after other growers, but the new regime is harvesting earlier to ensure freshness. The estate is also undertaking a systematic replanting of old vines, and with the 2025 vintage the Côte de Beaune parcels will be certified organic.

After harvesting, the Pinot Noir is sorted, before being chilled to 50° F. Then it passes by gravity into tank, where it undergoes a 10-day cold maceration before fermenting for 18 to 24 days. The malolactic conversion occurs in barrel, and the reds see about 20% new oak.

Prior to 2020, Chanson bought its 228-liter *pièces*, made from Hungarian oak, exclusively from cooper François

Frères. Since 2020, it has been sourcing French oak barrels from the St.-Romain cooperage of François Frères along with four other coopers.

In larger parcels, such as the 10-acre Beaune Clos des Fèves, which is a monopole wholly owned by Chanson, the vinifications and aging are performed separately based on vine age. One-third of the parcel at the top of the slope has vines 100 years old, with the remaining two-thirds 50 years old. The vines at the bottom of the slope are 30 years old.

The juice for the whites is pressed and barrel-fermented for about two to three weeks. The malolactic conversion also takes place in barrel. After 12 to 14 months in oak, the wines are racked and blended in tank, where they spend two months before bottling. There is some *bâtonnage* (stirring of the lees), depending on the vintage (e.g., in 2021 and 2023 to enrich the wines, but not in 2022), yet overall there are three to four times more volume of lees in barrel than under the former winemaking team. The finished wines also see a light fining and filtration.

While past vintages of Domaine Chanson wines, particularly the reds, were dense and concentrated, the 2022s feel more lively and vibrant. Young and determined, Savoye and Auger have something to prove. It’s clear they are proud of the work they’ve done, and doubling the size of the estate will keep them busy over the next several vintages.



The new guard at Domaine Chanson: (from left) Vincent Avenel, Lucy Auger and Justine Savoye