



CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

# DOMAINE DOMINIQUE CORNIN



## THE VILLAGE OF CHAINTRÉ IS THE MOST SOUTHERLY OF THE MÂCONNAIS WINE VILLAGES.

Less than ten minutes drive further to the south-west, travellers on the wine route will fall upon St Amour and barely a few kilometres beyond Julienas, Chénas and Fleurie lie in wait. To the naked eye, the transition from one zone to the other is easy to miss. The clue to the demarcation lies beneath one's feet: it is here that we find the last limestone soils before they give way to granite and sandstone.

The vineyards ripple down the slopes of the Chaintré hill, predominantly facing south and east falling towards the plain of the River Saône. Those within the village boundaries on the lower, flatter land towards the railway and the river carry the regional appellation, either simply as Mâcon-villages when blended with wines from other villages or as Mâcon-Chaintré when kept apart. Back up the slopes we are in the southeastern sector of Pouilly-Fuissé, the most prestigious appellation of the Mâconnais and one, since 2020, that now also carries 193 ha of premier cru vineyards, almost 18% of which are within Chaintré.



The Cornin family has been tending vines here for generations. Indeed, many of the vines still in production today were planted by Dominique's grandfather in the 1930s. For much of this time, the family were content to sell the grapes to the local co-operative however in 1993, Dominique Cornin made the decision to go solo. Domaine-bottling is something that is almost taken for granted today but it takes considerable courage to be the person to walk away from the guarantee of an annual cheque and choose to take the risk of making, bottling and selling one's own wine.



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In the winery, there are no special tricks. Great care is of course taken to get the picking date right, something that in this warmer zone of the Mâconnais can have a particularly great bearing on the outcome of the vintage. The bunches are loaded directly into pneumatic presses with the must allowed to settle at cold temperatures, helping to drop out the larger solids. Fermentation may then commence but only with the use of natural yeasts. Some of the young wines will then stay in tank for *élevage* while others will be transferred into either larger or smaller barrels, with only very small portions seeing new wood.

Currently there are nine wines produced. At the entry level, a basic **Beaujolais Blanc** is intended to be a simple, fresh and undemanding everyday wine to drink upon release. There are then three regional *cuvées*. First-up is the Mâcon-Chaintré, a blend across five parcels within the village at the foot of the hill on clay-limestone soils vinified 100% in stainless steel and bottled before the following harvest.

Motivated by his simple desire to give the best that his land had to offer and with the market incentive as well as the expectation of the family and its heritage driving him on, Dominique quickly decided to move away from systematic use of chemical products, such as herbicides. In 2003, he went further, conducting experiments in biodynamics on one hectare of his vines with the results prompting him to convert the whole estate, which achieved certification in 2009.

With old vines, a sustainable approach to viticulture embedded and a new winery completed in 2004, Dominique had completed the transition. His son, Romain had been working in the US and New Zealand, as well as at the well-regarded Mâcon producer Maison Verget, following the completion of his own studies. With Dominique beginning to plan his future retirement, father and son worked alongside each other for a number of years before Dominique fully handed over the reins. Today it is Romain, together with his wife Adeline, who run the 12.5 hectare estate and who are propelling it into the upper tiers of the appellation.



*Pouilly Fuissé 1er cru Les Chevrières*



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The **Mâcon-Fuissé Les Bruyres** comes from young vines planted on blue schistous soils, vinified in stainless steel. Romain considers it as a halfway point between Mâcon and Pouilly, combining the generosity of fruit of the former with a little of the steel of the latter. Completing our regional trio is the **Mâcon-Chaintré Les Serreuxdières**. Produced from a single vineyard with three separate plantings, the oldest of which are from 1936, this feels like a step-up in focus and delineation. "It has its feet in the clay and its shoulders facing east" proclaims Romain. This is certainly a very characterful and impressive wine but one that seems to be able to keep its open and inviting side too. It also offers fabulous value.

Part of Les Serreuxdières crosses the boundary into the neighbouring commune of Chânes where it gains the appellation **St-Véran**. There are two plantings here from 1936 and 1992 with vinification and élevage in stainless steel exactly as for the regional cuvées.

The remainder of the line-up is all about **Pouilly-Fuissé**. The first wine shown is a blend of four plots on the western border between Chaintré and Fuissé with the oldest vines planted in 1909. Here there is a small change in élevage, with 10-20% of the cuvée spending a year in barrel. Romain feels that the additional depth of material can handle the support of the wood while being encouraged to round out a little.

The three single vineyard Pouilly-Fuissé are then called to centre stage. **Pouilly-Fuissé Clos du Roy** is from a 0.5ha plot just below the 1er cru of Clos Reyssier, planted in 1936. The soils here are rich and deep, producing the most generous wine in the line-up. It is all vinified in old barrels for a year before spending a further year in tank on its fine lees. By contrast, **Pouilly-Fuissé Les Plessys** comes from two parcels totalling two-thirds of a hectare with east and southeast exposures on fine clay over active limestone. Old vines from 1920 combine with younger plants from 1998. There is a lifted, more scented and slightly spicy character to this wine. Reflecting this finer, more aromatic personality, Romain puts 50% into larger demi-muids (600 lt) barrels for a year before a second year in stainless steel in the same way as for the Clos du Roy.

Last in the line is **Pouilly-Fuissé 1er cru Les Chevrières**. Les Chevrières is a vineyard of some 11.36ha, exposed to the south and west on top of the hill of Chaintré and with a noted reddish tint to the clay soils, pointing towards its ferrous component sitting over the hard limestone mother rock. Dominique's father planted vines here in the 1960s for their owner, a Mlle Poisard who left them to the Hospices de Beaune. Reflecting the fermage agreement, the Cornin's were able to claim back their small share and today farm 0.8ha. The south-facing parcel is 0.2ha with less clay and lots of small stones while the west-facing parcel is very much the noted red clay. It makes for a long-lasting wine but Romain feels that it doesn't take wood particularly well and elects only to use the larger, more neutral demi-muids for élevage.

The Cornin family marry their obvious love and attachment for their land with their dedication to transmit its character through their wines and their technical skill that allows them to achieve this aim. In a short amount of time, they have quietly broken through into the top ranks but remain completely grounded, fully committed to Dominique's desire to achieve the potential of their land.

