

THE SOURCE  
**APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER**  
WRITTEN BY TED VANCE



*Château de Quintigny, Jura*

## GOING TO THE SUN

Some summers when I was in high school, I worked in Glacier National Park. Cleaning and trimming the greenery on the famous Going-to-the-Sun Road wasn't glamorous. But it beat running the newspaper route I started at twelve, working year-round through the heat of summer and the deep freeze of the real winters we had in Montana back in the 1980s. One morning, while I was delivering the behemoth Sunday paper, it dropped to around 40° below zero—the point below freezing where Fahrenheit and Celsius agree, the coldest temperature recorded in decades.

The snow had completely frozen over, cracking like I was walking on hard-baked merengue with powdered-sugar drifts curled by the wind into the shape of waves across a sea of white covering the countryside. My mother thankfully came to my rescue at the end of the route, saving me from an arduous return journey. It's funny that parents back then even let their 12-year-old kids go out alone on a Sunday morning starting at 7 AM in freezing temperatures, the mark of a Gen X childhood, not a helmeted kid on a bicycle in sight. In recent years, some of those same Gen Xers, now helicopter parents (a response to the danger they experienced), with Zoomer kids, or those over-protected Millennials with Alphas of their own, would call Child Protective Services.

One day, when I was going up the mountain with a seasoned park ranger who'd been there for years, a man with a thick salt-and-nutmeg grizzly-pelt beard, black-rimmed bottle cap glasses, a sweaty old ranger baseball cap, a sunken, worn face, fake front teeth, always sarcastic, always with a joke ready. While he shifted his three-on-the-tree (what they called it when the manual handle was on the steering column), the engine wheezing like it was constantly out of breath, we drifted into a discussion about why birds turn their heads sideways toward the ground when searching for bugs. I said it was mostly because they're listening, which he seemed to think was stupid, as it sent him into a condescending roar of laughter. We bounced around banalities like that until we somehow landed on family, then love.

“Love?” he chuckled again. “I fall in love up here every day.” Watching where his eyes went and how often his neck followed, I knew he wasn't talking about the scenery.

I, too, fell in love every day, but that started before the Going-to-the-Sun Road. In the years that followed, I was looking for more, searching for my wife, and finally found her in 2006. But it was long before her, when I was 19, that I moved far away from the snow to the Arizona desert and tripped into a lifelong obsession for wine in the fall of 1995, the first true love of my life.

Like many whose lives orbit wine and its mysteries, my obsession for wine continues to grow. Some are crafted by architectural minds that seek only the purest expression of terroir. Some wines are a journey around the sun and back. Sometimes a new voice enters the ancient conversation, quietly finding the courage to carry it forward in its own way. And then there are those that floor us all by their concession of perfectionism to the perfectly imperfect.

In this newsletter, we have three of these four—the fourth will be featured in mid-April. In the meantime, we will focus on three of the truest highlights of our collection of growers that would shine just as brightly in any importer's collection, without exception.

PHILIPPE CHATILLON | JURA  
PERFECTION OF THE PERFECTLY IMPERFECT



I feel obliged to start the new arrivals section of this newsletter with Philippe Chatillon.

Since my first taste of Philippe’s 2014 Vin Jaune a few years ago, followed by my first visit to the cellar in November 2024, and the second shortly thereafter, his wines have grown on me like *voile*, and are constantly on my mind. Obsession? To put it mildly ... I have indeed had many obsessions before Philippe entered my life, but few have generated such completeness and utter personal satisfaction as his white wines. Perfectly imperfect? Not exactly. More like uniquely perfect. Jura perfect. Perhaps not for everyone, but definitely for me.

I know some other importers were sniffing around long before I set foot in Philippe’s cellar. As an importer, you know when you’ve found a goose that’s laying golden eggs, when you couldn’t care less if you sell a single bottle of your entire US allocation and must drink them all yourself. And for one of these geese to be in the Jura, it was a no-brainer. Some said the pricing was high, but whose pricing in the Jura’s elite isn’t? Indeed, the prices put them out of “everyday” drinking. But with a complete production for the entire world of these masterpiece wines, some with a production of just a barrel or two, and a mere total of 8000 bottles per year, no one (even if they had all the money in the world), except Philippe and his son, Anatole, could have these at every meal. And Philippe is no newcomer—only his domaine is relatively new.

I can imagine him on his first solo vintage in 2013 after 18 years as the regisseur of the biodynamically run Domaine La Pinte and his role as a *formateur* in the Jura. He was teaching organic and biodynamic viticulture at the Lycée Viticole de Montmorot, thinking like Hemingway in front of his vineyards and barrels, “You have always made wine, and you will make wine again. All you have to do is make one true wine. Make the truest wine you know how to make, and go on from there.”



One of Jura’s quiet masters, the gentle and generous Philippe Chatillon amassed a bite-sized collection the vineyard holding of 1.95 ha in Arbois, 1 ha in Passenans & Monay in the Côtes du Jura, and 0.20 ha in Château-Chalon, where he practices organic and biodynamics shaped in part by formal training with Pierre Masson (one of the most important contemporary teachers and codifiers of biodynamic viticulture in France). This is what one would call “human scale,” in the sense that it’s just enough for one vigneron with occasional help to complete his year’s work in near solitude. Uniquely, he incorporates sound vibration into the élevage of his wines with a crystal pipe harp and crystal bowls. Seems mystical indeed, but whatever he’s doing, the proof is in the pudding.

Philippe’s own wines, produced in extremely small quantities (under 8,000 bottles per year, including just 200–300 bottles of Vin Jaune in less generous vintages), are drawn from limestone and marl soils and shaped by élevage in old oak (sometimes in amphora) and crystal vibrations, and always without sulfites.

With the 2026 vintage, Philippe begins passing the reins to his fiery son, Anatole, a deep lover of sous voile and vin jaune, ensuring the continuity of both method and spirit of these extremely fine and subtle Jura wines chez Chatillon. We have plenty of time to get to Anatole’s undoubtedly

successful future. For now, it's time to celebrate his father, one of Jura's most quietly influential yet impactful voices in Jura's celebrated history.

Nights of clinking crystal of our own among thoughtful company, weeks with open bottles in my fridge—a little nip here, a full taste there, always a cut of medium-aged Comté, or sometimes well-aged Beaufort or Gruyère—I have lived inside the Jura through its wines long enough to understand and develop great appreciation from its short list of Vin Jaune, flor, and ouillé masters.



While many of Jura's top growers present wines of gilded history from a bygone era (baroque, sometimes austere, other times glycerol, brothy, and concentrated after years under flor) and those on the other side that echo the style of the Côte d'Or just to the west, some in Philippe's range embody the feeling of a unique dream-state, somewhere in the fog and clouds that rise from the land into the skies; others lean toward classicism but always maintain finesse. His reds sculpted from living earth are tied together with fall fruits—an excavation by the roots rather than the limbs into the sky. The whites, often a capture of a sunset's fiery illumination piercing heavy rain, a reflection in every drop—Philippe's own *route vers le Soleil*.

The topped-up versions (known as *ouillé*) of Philippe's wines are extraordinary efforts. Obsession at first taste, the **2023 CÔTES DU JURA CHARDONNAY 'LA GRANDE CHAUDE'** is one of the most profound wines I've encountered in the last five years. Philippe knew I instantly loved it—the four times I snuck a retaste and didn't spit a drop undoubtedly tipped him off—and, of course, the Vin Jaune too, which Anatole was “forcing” upon us over the lunch made by his mother. Before I arrived, Philippe already prepared a mixed case of white wines for me—two each of what is arriving in the

US, plus a greedy six-bottle ask of Vin Jaune. Philippe doubled down: “Are you sure you don’t want a full case of La Grand Chaude?” I so badly wanted it but felt it would be too indulgent in the company of the Chatillon family and my two colleagues, as they witnessed my insatiable thirst for the glimmering gold of *my precious* ... I giddily left the cellar in December with eight bottles—what a coup! I could’ve fallen off a cliff into a lava pool, and I wouldn’t have been bothered. But it still was not enough.



A month later, I had already swallowed three liters of it with my wife and friends. I went online and bought more from a trusted French retailer. Another six arrived; another six down. From Saint Nick’s to Saint Valentine’s, every wine person that passed through my house had a bottle with me, and everyone left with the same feeling: that wine sure was *something*, alright. Some people stared in confusion—pressed between their hesitation and my conviction—and those nights the wine didn’t seem to want to give itself to us completely in the company of many other wines on the table. But the nights it stood with fewer wines under the Jura-green limelight, it did release its everything—it’s supernova. And with those bottles, I was not the only Smeagol by the end of the night.

Philippe could rename this wine, rendered from vines planted in 1970, El Camino de Passenans, because this is one of the trippiest wine caminos I’ve ever walked. It starts with a subtle twang of maple syrup and liquid sweet-and-sour greens, mid-coursing with sonically piercing, candied margarita lemon and lime softened by a salty rim two hours later, the afterglow—a transcendent-liquid-Aurora-Borealis.

One of the greatest mistakes upon having the pleasure of digesting a bottle of this wine—and any other of Philippe’s whites arrived in this batch—would be to rush through it. This wine is no snort. Invite a dear friend. Leave the others in the rack. Pull the Comté hours in advance to let it warm up. Pop the Cork. Start with Pink Floyd and slowly work toward Bach. Then forget the world and let this wine swallow you whole.



As I begin writing about Philippe’s **2022 ARBOIS BLANC, “LES NOUVELLES” (OUILLE)**, I have a fifth of the bottle still left after four days of sitting with it. Much more recognizable as a Jura wine and in some way more than the flamboyantly unbridled solar sailor from the mercurial 2023 vintage, La Grande Chaude, this more muscular wine carries a similar result to the many compact and powerful European 2022 whites in this hot year that seems to have been reinforced by the cold year before it. From Austria to Germany, across north and central France, and across northern Iberia, 2022 is a surprisingly successful white wine vintage.

Even if some in the industry quickly moved past 2022 because it was a “hot year” in Europe, that’s not what’s reflected in the wines, particularly the whites. Whites from many of the regions we work have a compact core, wide shoulders, and bullish thrust, framed by a dazzling array of complexities found in the great years; they even have surprisingly fresh acidity, which may be partially due to the cold, wet and difficult year prior that helped preserve moisture in the soil. 2022s will bring a lot of pleasure for years to come because there’s a lot of it and because they show no signs that they’ll fade early.

The ouillé version of Les Nouvelles is a different kind of ride than La Grande Chaude: less starburst and more concentrated control, like getting whipped into a hundred-foot Nazaré bomb, setting your rail, and holding the line at full speed for eternity. Aged for three years in barrel with regular topping up, it's a little bit of the same Aurora Borealis, but a lot more cold and salty Atlantic steel. The austerity of this Savagnin, taken from a steep face at 500 meters on marne grise, restrains the glow but builds an internal pressure and tension stretched from its denser core, like the bent spectrum of light pulled tight around a black hole. While the 2022 version of this wine, now in 2026, may have less initial charm than La Grande Chaude, this powerful ultra-marathoner delivers plenty of thrill for the patient and keen observer. It burns slower but seems everlasting.

The examples I had at both the cellar and my home in Spain showed wonderfully, but our California team expressed that it was more shaken up more than a month after their trans-Atlantic journey than Philippe's other wines. Like all Chatillon whites with a slight Milky Way haze, I suggest—no, I respectfully insist—letting this Les Nouvelles rest upright for at least a month before pulling the cork and pouring gently to ensure fuller delivery.



Harvest from the vines as the ouillé Les Nouvelles but topped up for the first half of its four-year élevage followed by no topping for the second half, the **2018 ARBOIS BLANC, 'LES NOUVELLES' (OXYDATIF)** is a more stern and classically styled oxydatif Jura wine that sits squarely between a Vin Jaune style and those topped up (ouillé). 2018 produced sterner wines than the vintage prior, and this bottling has some muscle despite its surprisingly low 13% alcohol. I took my time with over four days in the company of a succession of two new Source winegrowers passing through on consecutive nights—Marc Isart, known for his Gredos wines (co-founder of Commando G,

winemaker at Bernabeleva for more than a decade, and now his new project started in 2023, Salvajes de Gredos), and Paul Chevreux, a Jura-born Frenchman with a perfect theatrical British English who in 2021 started Vizinho Vinhateiro in Portugal's Dão with his Alsatian wife, Charlotte Hugel, from Domaine Hugel.

Excited to finally get into this bottle after so many of these others over the last months (but mostly the Chardonnay—total obsession), my first mistake was my icy fridge. This rookie move stunted its rise, but after a half hour of warming up and aerating, it rose indeed. Sinewy and muscular at first, it unfurled and began to crackle like the filaments of one of Nikola Tesla's spherical coils, thin strands of electricity arcing out from the dense core of this welcomingly austere and lightly prickly Savagnin. Over the three days, once past its icy start, it remained in full form: upright, never a moment of slack, yet always with the perfect amount of restrained generosity. My wife and I finally finished it off on its fourth day. Still unflinchingly stoic, its message was still delivered with conviction.

Like all the wines in this first official U.S. offer from Chatillon, rather than sipping it alone, it plays best with a supporting cast of edibles to see the extent of its magnificence—well, maybe that kind too—Comté over all things, and perhaps a regional classic: chicken with morels first to get it warmed up for the main event.



Seeking to know what a few U.S. critics shared about the 2017 vintage in Jura (because until this moment my references are general for this year, a vintage that I love the wines of the *relatively* neighboring Chablis and Côte d'Or), I was surprised to see that neither Vinous nor Parker have reviewed Chatillon's wines—and just as good that they don't! However, one note by Vinous' Nicolas

Greinacher on the recently released 2017 Macle Château Chalon is also perfectly suited for Philipp's **2017 VIN JAUNE**: hauntingly elegant. Now, if Greinacher has applied this description to Macle, perhaps the leader among the historical greats in classically-styled Vin Jaune and Château Chalon lore, you have to imagine something even more hauntingly elegant than that with Philippe's version! What is clear—after four bottles of Philippe's gorgeous masterpiece Vin Jaune—is that it is way too young. Each bottle was opened and enjoyed over at least a week, and each day it put on weight and lost nothing along the way, only gaining in momentum, structure, depth and extroversion. On the last taste of every bottle, I was invigorated by the wine but always felt I had drunk it too fast, even after more than a week open.

Its naturally ethereal qualities always remained intact but yielded to some serious bodybuilding as the aeration gave the wine a bigger pump from one day to the next. Not only is this a positive sign for its ageability, but also for the stability of this sans soufre ajouté wine. Also, as I almost always do, I left these wines uncorked in my refrigerator, which counterintuitively yields positive results even when compared to recorked wines.

The 2017 Vin Jaune is tight at first, but this is to be expected, and it's a good sign that it's on the right track. Vin Jaune is not a wine for today but rather for when the Gen Z and Millennial drinkers who actually like wine (or maybe come back around to it) start to get a few gray hairs. These wines are keepers. Buy them and build a brick wall in front of them at the back of your cellar to keep them from tempting you. And if you're a sommelier and can offer them on a tasting menu or keep them tucked into your back pocket for special clients who would appreciate this kind of wine, where they will be open for days and gain a little roundness and weight, enjoy the beauty of such a young and gorgeous Vin Jaune.

It should also be expected that most of the other whites arriving from Philippe are more expressive straight out of the gate by design. They haven't been sheltered under flor in a long, oxidative élevage for six years like the Vin Jaune, and they come out ready for the party. Take it from me: with this bottle of Vin Jaune and corkscrew in hand, ask yourself if you're sure you want to do this right now. I took it as my job to study—also admire and enjoy—the four bottles, and unless you promise yourself that no matter how good it is on its first day exposed to the elements since bottling, and that you won't kill the bottle in one night, redirect the corkscrew. Study the still wines first, and you will know where this wine will be in a decade or two.

Indeed, not all wines are worth an extended investment of time and patience, but Vin Jaune is one of the great exceptions—even in the face of A.I. potentially dusting us all before you get around to pulling that cork; it's a worthwhile gamble for your future self.

Another reason to steady that corkscrewing hand is that, sadly, Vin Jaune and its neighboring youngsters in the cellar seem poised to follow the stratospheric pricing trend seen with the Côte d'Or on the region's still wines and Madeira-level price obscenity and scarcity on its Vin Jaune. Lovers of wine and believers in your ever-evolving palate who may not appreciate these wines yet, get in there anyway and get your stash before those with more dollars than sense take greater notice of the rarest and perhaps most historical white wines of France. Forget Bitcoin, invest in your future drinking pleasure now—even if the prices already seem high, they will be a bargain compared to where they will be when the 2025 Vin Jaune hits the market six or seven years from now.

## CAMIN LARREYDA | JURANÇON

### AROUND THE SUN AND BACK



A defining trait of any inspired craftsman is unwavering conviction. The even rarer quality is the ability to render inspiration exactly as it lived in the mind.

Every wine Jean-Marc Grussaute creates delivers the message. His range of dry-to-sweet Jurançon has few equals in the region, and everything under his label podiums in its category and price. We carry a few bright feathers in our cap; this one is aflame with its colors—a range that runs around the sun and back, from the driest and most mineral expressions of the Mansengs to the most lusciously concentrated and exquisitely balanced sweet wines.

With the unexpected early passing of his father, a young Jean-Marc returned home from his life as a professional rugby player and wasted no time converting his family's 9.5 hectares to organic farming and later to biodynamics—certified as both. He propelled Jurançon's historic Camin Larredya to international fame and recently drew even more attention with his award from *La Revue du vin de France* as the "2023 Vigneron de l'Année." There's only one of those each year, by the way, a remarkable honor for such a fun-loving and humble vigneron.





The vines grow on the higher-altitude eastern side of the appellation across amphitheater-shaped, south-facing verdant terraces of limestone and limestone conglomerate bedrock, known as *Poudingue de Jurançon*, capped with shallow, rocky clay topsoil. Atlantic and Pyrenean winds from the snow-capped mountains to the south sweep these slopes and shape his blends of Gros Manseng, Petit Manseng, and Petit Courbu in both sweet and dry expressions. In the cellar, Jean-Marc marries tradition and innovation using old barriques, large Stockinger foudres, Tava amphoras, and amphora eggs.

Camín Larredya's wines mirror the man who crafted them: charismatic, hospitable, imposing, calming, intellectual and confident. To taste in Jean-Marc's cellar is to feel tended to by a giant—a man with massive hands and an even bigger heart. You stand with a stem in hand beside a force of mental and physical strength—the kind you want leading the charge into a scrum.

## A QUICK REFRESHER ON THE GRAPES

The grapes used in Jurançon are not so well known because it's rare to find them on labels as stand-alone varietal bottlings. According to Jancis Robinson's *Wine Grapes* (2012), "... the most likely pedigree strongly suggests that **PETIT MANSENG** is a progeny of Savagnin and a parent of Gros Manseng." This variety is perfect for gorgeously fine, honeyed, sweet wines due to its long growing season, its highly concentrated sugar and acidity late in the season, and its thick skins and loose bunches that offer greater protection from rot. Jean-Marc still makes sweet wines, but on the dry ones, he uses the same raw material and pulls them back from that edge. Picked earlier and vinified dry, the grape reveals its modern personality: tension, bitterness, herbs, electricity under the fruit.

Costa Blanca is the rare scenario where Jean-Marc feels that Petit Manseng can find harmony as the dominant varietal within its own intense natural balance. Referring to how it serves his blended wines, Jean-Marc says, “Petit Manseng is the cornerstone of the wines: structure, aromatic nobility, volume, acidity, length, and the wine’s stronger identity. The other grape varieties contribute to mitigating the major excesses of Petit Manseng vinified purely as a dry wine: excess sugar at maturity, excess glycerol and fat, making it difficult to drink alone.”



The other Manseng, **GROS MANSENG**, shares many similarities with its parent, Petit Manseng: thick skins, small berries, a similar long ripening cycle, but it often produces a greater yield. It’s also known to be more aromatically open with greater lift than Petit Manseng. Jean-Marc: “The variety with the tangy structure, bringing a touch of fresh citrus fruit.” This tang can certainly be felt in both Part Davant and La Virada, as “tang” was the first aromatic note I wrote about the 2024 just days before Jean-Marc wrote the same word in French, *acidulée*, in an email responding to my inquiry of how these grapes play in the sandbox together.

The minor players in his wines also have small berries and loose bunches, but don’t withstand the same botrytis pressure as the thicker-skinned Muscels. **CAMARALET** and **COURBU**, are described by Jean-Marc as grapes that “further temper the excesses of Petit Manseng; they are relatively unstructured grape varieties: Camaralet produces white-fleshed fruit, while Courbu is rather neutral.”

## THE WINES



The first bottle of **2024 JURANÇON SEC “PART DAVANT”** tasted (drank) in early January didn’t waste a moment exploding into sixth gear. Epically charming, it quickly evolves into a powerhouse—a profound wine buttressed by strong, fully ripe and even slightly dehydrated (but not dried) fleshy white berries, mirabelle, underripe miniature green fig, spice and a faint but pixel-pointed butter toffee. As I did with Philippe Chatillon’s 2023 La Grande Chaude, instead of asking Jean-Marc for a second helping, I ordered one from an online retailer to get a second take. The result? Same as the first: relentless.

The Béarnais name, La Part Davant has a better ring to it than The Front Part. (No one could get away with “the front part” on a fancy bottle of American wine!) From four hectares on three adjacent parcels at the front of the property, it sits on a steep eastern flank facing south and southeast at 235-285 meters. The blend is 50% Gros Manseng, 30% Petit Manseng, and 20% Petit Courbu planted between 1950 and 2010. It undergoes a natural fermentation in oak foudre for about 60 days at 20°C maximum—a good choice balance for fruit preservation and inviting secondary aromas and flavors early on. It’s then on lees for 8-10 months in 25-hl foudre (66%) and amphora (34%), and undergoes full malolactic fermentation. At bottling, it’s lightly filtered, and the final tally on sulfites is around 50 mg/L total.

The **2024 JURANÇON SEC “LA VIRADA”** starts with that aromatic tang, and the second glass brings the familiar complexing aroma of honey and first-of-the-season peach—slightly bitter edge but sweet and floral—skin and pit. Baklava notes expand on the palate: doughy, caramelized butter, walnuts

and spice, all contrasted by a dry, strongly metallic mineral-and-herbal finish. The third glass, fifteen minutes later, begins to fire. On the second day, the wine is much more settled into itself. The mineral palate really starts to cut: cold steel almost etching into the tongue. This wine obviously needs time. The aromas remain fairly subtle, but the palate is anything but. It glows and forcibly activates your salivary glands with tons of buzzing acid. Another rewarding element of this wine is the welcome bitter mouthfeel that keeps it tightly textured. The palate is wonderful. It has peach skin for days, a great wine to start with lunch and finish off with dinner.



Composed of 40% Petit Manseng, 30% Gros Manseng, 15% Petit Courbu and 15% Camaralet from 30-year-old vines. It's natural fermentation for up to 60 days in 1200 L oak foudre at 20° C, maximum. Aged on lees for 10 months in 1200 L oak foudre with full malolactic fermentation in 2024 to further soften the acidity (most vintages it's only a partial malolactic). Light filtration and approximately 50 mg/L total added sulfites.

Sitting near Danny Meyer's Shake Shack in Madison Square Park, you don't have to move much to take in a small hierarchy of Manhattan architecture. Just to the southwest stands the Flatiron Building: elegant, historic, perfectly composed—Part Davant. Shift your gaze slightly, and the majesty of the Met Life Tower rises on the park's southeast edge, the tallest building in New York from 1909 to 1913, climbing to 213 meters—La Virada. But then, almost inevitably (as it was for my first time in the park), your eyes drift north, and the legendary Empire State Building towers over everything else in the skyline, at first glance almost leaning toward you—that's **COSTA BLANCA**. From Part Davant to La Virada to Costa Blanca, confidence runs through the range. But Costa Blanca sits comfortably on top of its game, regardless of what other structures rise in its skyline, or the skyline of any other wine region in the world. A grand wine, indeed.



The nose of Costa Blanca smells refined and expensive—noble, like the grapes were poised to rot in the good way for those honeyed wines, but Jean-Marc snatched them early for dry wine instead.

It's a pity there's no sweet wine from Costa Blanca around at the moment; the 2021 must be my favorite memory of any sweet wine in the last decade. If you ever have the chance to have it, spend the money. I regret that the mere sixty bottles we elected to import in our first year working with Jean-Marc wasn't ten times that. I regret not being confident enough in their towering presence among our collection of growers, and that our customers would get it, which they did, but not as much as they wanted, either. I regret not having but a single bottle left for when, I have no idea, but would have to be very special, to involve foie gras, as my second-to-last bottle did.

Soften the austerity and sharp digital edge of La Virada 2024, run it through warm analog, dress it for the coronation, and you have Costa Blanca. Chestnut honey, toasted oats, spice, filo dough, lightly bitter orange zest and orange marmalade on the front; on the finish, fine herbs—sage, sweet marjoram, tarragon, cistus flower—almost certainly brought on by the natural tendencies of the herbaceous but exotic Manseng, and the right phenolic edge to keep the palate fresh and alive without leaning all the textural pressure on acidity. Because of the heat of the 2023 season, this Costa Blanca Sec is much gentler than the edgier 2021. In this blend of 70% Petit Manseng, 15% Camaralet, and 15% Lauzet (another Jurançon rare variety noted for its spiciness, small bunches and berries, solid acidity), there exists throwback aromatic characteristics to the stickies of Anjou without botrytis—and its neighboring Maury or Rivesaltes from Roussillon. Like many great whites, it opens, then narrows like a falcon, drawing in its wings as it dives into the hunt with ever-increasing velocity.

Day two: return to full blossom.

Located about five miles to the southwest of Camin Larredya's cellar and main vineyards, Costa Blanca comes from a 1-ha south-facing Petit Manseng plot planted in 2014 and 2017 on a soft slope at 200 meters on limestone bedrock with a shallow clay and rocky topsoil. Its natural fermentation lasts for about 60 days in oak foudre at 20°C max. Aged on lees for 15 months in a 12-hl sandstone egg. Partial malolactic fermentation. Sterile filtration (due to remaining malic acid) and with 50mg/L total sulfur. Residual sugar: 2g/L (dry).



With a bottle of **2023 JURANÇON MOELLEUX "AU CAPCEU"** and Marc and Paul coming by my place just before this newsletter deadline, I held out so I could share it with them along with a slab of foie gras terrine—the first night with Marc, an apricot preserve made in 2011 by my late friend, Pierre Castel, and the second night with Paul, Peter Veyder-Malberg's lighter version of apricot preserve, vintage 2024. Both were spot on. Marc was so taken by it that he seemed determined to finish it off, which was a surprise after so many other fabulous wines. At 13% alcohol, 110 g/L of residual sugar, and the elegant lift found across much of Europe with the 2023 vintage, it went down far too easily for a dessert wine. And for this price and quality, it's a total steal; yet another wine that could supply you with a nip or two each night for a week to savor it over time, along with the bottle of Vin Jaune you've also treated yourself to. Incredibly, because of the high acidity of Petit Manseng, I learned from Marc's enthusiastic pours after the foie gras was long gone that this finely spiced and lightly honeyed, stone fruit-rich Au Capceu doesn't need food to cut the flow of sugar. It's a stunning wine, and I wish we had far more than the five cases we were allocated.

The steep vineyards for this Petit Manseng wine were planted from 1970 to 1995 on south and east faces at 280-300m. It's naturally fermented for 90 days in oak foudre and aged on lees for 12 months

in 12-hl foudre (50%) and 225-l French oak (50%). It doesn't undergo malolactic fermentation, and must be filtered due to residual sugar and the presence of malic acid.

## MARTIN MUTHENTHALER | WACHAU

### ARCHITECTURAL PURITY



Of all the world's noble white wines, the highest expressions of dry Riesling are among those that depend most on terroir architecture. Without an exceptionally gifted terroir, Riesling rarely reaches the level of its peers. Chardonnay and Grüner Veltliner can produce compelling wines across a broad range of sites, for example, but dry Riesling demands something more exacting from its ground. Remove the steep, rocky, topsoil-sparse cold faces of skeletal slate, fractured gneiss and schist, and great limestone vineyards whose secrets lie beneath often unimpressive slopes that so often frame its greatest expressions, and what remains is diffuse—aromatic but lacking shape and tension.

When the site is in beautiful natural balance, the opposite occurs. At its highest level, dry Riesling takes on a taut structure that's precise in resolution. This architectural balance produces a paradoxical effect: absolute complexity emerging from an almost austere simplicity of form. Cellar tinkering cannot disguise mediocre terroir with Riesling, but when the architecture of a gifted site leads, few wines convey precision, structure and complexity with the same crystalline clarity.

If we believe in terroir and want to experience it through its utmost naked lens, crafted by growers who cede their hand to the voice of their land, then in Austria, we must travel to its Riesling and

Grüner Veltliner promised land, its deepest and coldest burrow, the Wachau's Spitzer Graben. This is home to three of the world's great terroir channelers: the Spitzer Graben's modern-day O.G., Peter Veyder-Malberg, its new capable tribe of idealists at Grabenwerkstatt, and perhaps the hardest-working vine crafter I've known, whose wines speak terroir truth in absolute, Martin Muthenthaler.

While Martin's wines are a departure from the often baroque Wachau style, they still express the flavors and aromatic nuances associated with Grüner Veltliner and Riesling inside of the Wachau; this is to say that while they're international in some small way, there's no mistaking their origin—and this may not be as clear between the other two top growers inside of the Spitzer Graben. Typically, Martin's wines are intense. Their core is dense, and their architecture lacks fluff and fat—just like their maker: few curves, straight to the point.





The Spitzer Graben is the farthest west and the coldest section on the north side (left bank) of the Danube (Donau) River. In Martin's earlier years (pre-Veyder-Malberg's Wachau rebellion that quietly ignited in 2008), few were paying attention to this deeper Spitzer Graben area away from the Danube. It was off the river into a notoriously frigid valley, which meant that mostly only lower levels of ripeness were achievable, and rarely found enough strength for the celebrated Smaragd wines without dehydrating grapes on the vine to increase the required elevated alcohol levels to qualify for the highest classification of dry wine in the Wachau.

Martin's return home in 2005 to work his family's tiny parcel of "Buschenschank," deep in the Spitzer Graben, was the perfect moment to dig into this quiet section of the Wachau all but abandoned decades before. Now it may be recognized as a good investment in the face of climate change (at least when it's not sacrificed to the frost and hail gods) for those who prize elegant austerity over power. With new global interest and demand for more soft-handed viticultural tactics, it was also the optimal moment to flow toward the green side of the force, instead of against it.

## MARTIN'S WINES



One particularly compelling attribute of his Grüner Veltliners is that they are much closer in structure and feel to Riesling than most others. Another fabulous quality (due to the skill of the grower) is that even warmer vintages still taste and feel like colder ones, at least when they're young.

Grüner Veltliner grapes are immediately pressed over an eight-hour cycle, tank-settled for 12 hours, and then undergo spontaneous natural fermentation with maximum temperatures of 18 to 22°C.

The Spitzer Graben bottling is aged in steel, whereas all the others are in medium-sized oak vats, where they continue to age for 10 months. Malolactic rarely happens but is not inhibited. The first sulfites are added a month after fermentation, and the wines are lightly filtered before bottling without fining.

Riesling grapes are macerated for up to eight hours, depending on the ripeness (with riper grapes receiving less time), pressed over an eight-hour cycle, tank settled for 12 hours, and then undergo spontaneous natural fermentation with maximum temperatures of 18 to 22°C. For ten months before bottling, Brandstatt ages in 320-liter steel vats, Bruck in 700- to 1000-liter steel, Stern in 700-liter acacia. Malolactic rarely happens but is not inhibited. The first sulfites are added a month after fermentation, and the wines are lightly filtered before bottling without fining.

## TERROIRS

Martin's small organically-certified plots inside these rather large, classified vineyards range in altitude by a couple of hundred meters. Though they are generally variations of south-southwestern faces, this means great diversity in formations, aspects and exposures. It should be noted that Martin is the only commercial grower in the Spitzer Graben working solely with its local fruit.



**GRÜNER VELTLINER 'SPITZER GRABEN'** is the largest production wine in Martin's range and represents the fresh and pointed effect of this cold valley's wines when picked around a potential alcohol of 12%. The grapes are the first pick of the season from many vineyards planted between 1980 and 2017. The altitudes range from 320 to 400 meters with south/southwest exposures on mostly very

steep terraces propped up by rock walls. The thin topsoil is rich in organic matter mixed with rock and sand derived from the underlying bedrock of gneiss, mica schist, and other metamorphic rock formations such as amphibolite, paragneiss, and quartzite, and maybe some loess.

Planted in 2000, Martin's two parcels for his **GRÜNER VELTLINER RIED SCHÖN** sit between 350 and 400 meters on extremely steep terraces, one with a west face on the main hill, and the other southeast. The thin topsoil is 20 cm deep and rich in organic matter with a rock-and-sand topsoil derived from the underlying gneiss bedrock.

A subsection in the upper terraces of Bruck is Martin's **MONOPOLLAGE STERN**. His **GRÜNER VELTLINER** was planted by his great-grandfather in 1950 and are his oldest vines, and the **RIESLING** was planted in 1989. At 410 to 450 meters, they are also on extremely steep terraces on a southern exposure set closest to the forest. This stimulates a faster cooling effect in the summer and even more contact with nature, for a greater influence of biodiversity. The meager 10-cm-deep topsoil is rich in mostly organic matter with little rock and sand derived from the underlying bedrock of mica schist. Regardless of the grape, Stern is a beam of light, fresh and pure; a capture of the essence of this challengingly high altitude, steep, rocky, and cold site inside this breathtaking verdant valley.



**RIESLING RIED BRUCK** was planted from 1990 to 2005 in the Wachau's Spitzer Graben, where it sits at 370 to 385 meters on extremely steep terraces with south-southwest exposure. Martin's parcel has thin sandy and rocky topsoil derived from an underlying bedrock of mica schist. Led by its striking acidity and angular sculpting with its time only in steel, Bruck is the most pointed and ethereal of Martin's Rieslings.



**RIED BRANDSTATT** has become a staple vineyard among the top growers in Spitzer Graben. The vineyards are cut off toward the bottom of the southern side, where the rock resisted the force of what was once a torrential waterway (formerly the Danube!), leaving some short cliffs, often with houses tucked underneath. The northern side of the vineyard is on a softer slope and is the last fully cultivated hillside for winegrowing on the north side of the Spitzer Graben. Their **RIESLING** is planted between 390 and 430 meters on the south side of the steep but softer terraced slopes, and the terrace rows are interplanted with the **GRÜNER VELTLINER** away from the terrace walls to catch more wind; the Riesling is closer to the rock walls for added heat. The thin topsoil here is rich in organic matter, with rock and sand derived from the underlying bedrock of gneiss and mica schist. Their other section of Brandstatt, about 600 meters north, is planted only to Grüner Veltliner at 370 to 400 meters. Here, the slopes are softer but still very steep, and the topsoil is a little deeper, also rock and sand derived from the underlying bedrock of gneiss and mica schist. Martin considers this his Grand Cru.