



Chateau Revelette: a German winegrower in Provence

by Pierre Casamayor

January 23, 2017

Nestled in the heart of Provence, Chateau Revelette was founded in 1985 by Peter Fischer. Peter is a German winegrower who succumbed to the charm of this demanding terroir and who knows how to express the character and wild purity of the area.

In the area of Jouques, nestled among oak trees, pines and junipers, an estate with 40 ha of vines belonged to Peter Fischer's family. Over time some vines were sold to a neighbor and some grapes grown on the estate were sold in bulk to merchants. However with family capital, Peter Fischer took over the remaining 12 hectares (including 85 year-old Carignan vines) and in 1991 he decided to plant 12 new hectares. Today, Chateau Revelette consists of those mature vines, along with an additional six hectares, extending the domaine to 30 ha in total.

Peter Fischer's German industrial family hails from the area of Baden. With his epicurean, wine loving family, Peter was fascinated by agriculture early on. After moving to the U.S where he worked as a tractor driver, Fischer began studying oenology and viticulture at UC Davis. Back in Europe, he joined Rhone Vignoble, working under Jean-Luc Colombo, whose style has influenced Peter's own. In the northern extremity of the Coteaux d'Aix en Provence appellation, north of Sainte Victoire, the microclimate is particularly unique with huge temperature differences throughout the year. Freezing winters are followed by hot dry summers, with any cold winds from the mountains being blocked by surrounding mountain ranges.

Biodynamic since 1990:

Comprised of 12 plots surrounded by forest, the vineyard is between 330 and 400m, an altitude which contributes to the freshness of the wines. Since arriving, Peter Fischer had been warned by the people of the region: "Grapes don't reach ripeness at Jouques!" Effectively, Peter needed to push the Cabernet to its limits in order to have the irreplaceable structure that the Cabernet in his wines are known for.

The calcareous clay loam soils resemble those of Mercurey. For Peter's red wines, the grape varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Grenache, Carignan and Cinsault; for the white wines, he grows Ugni Blanc, Rolle, Roussanne, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

The vineyard is trellised and soils are worked in alternate rows with grass growing on the other. Sheep compost is added every three years. Vine rows are weeded with a tractor or a hoe, and pruned wood is chipped. Chateau Revelette has implemented biodynamic practices since 1990 and uses sulfur, copper, mashed horsetail and nettle. There is a necessary treatment to prevent odium, but copper doses stay below 2 kg/ha. While biodynamics tests have been conducted for the past 5 years, Peter Fisher has not yet committed to following astronomical configurations.

Aging Practices:

Grapes are sorted in the vineyard, harvested, and transported in boxes; where they are cooled at 12 C in a six ton fridge. The cellar is equipped with traditional concrete tanks, large barrels and concrete eggs. Reds are vinified in tanks and large barrels, or smaller tanks of 500 liters, using only naturally occurring yeast, and without any additions. After grapes are crushed, maceration occurs for six weeks, followed by malolactic fermentation. All are completed without intervention.

As with the fermentation process, grapes varieties are also aged separately: Syrah in new barrels, Cabernet in 3 – 4 year-old barrels, 10% of which are new oak, and Grenache in foudres. While not a necessity, Peter Fischer is always willing to experiment with new techniques.

Whites and Rosés macerate in the press for 5 to 7 hours under CO₂. Pressed juices are separated and vinified in egg, in tanks or in foudre depending on the grapes varieties and cuvees, and a portion will be in neutral barrels of various ages. They are vinified and aged on fine lees without sulfur, and only a low dose is added at bottling.

Influenced by his experiences in California, Peter's first wines had a signature aroma. Wines were concentrated, overtly ripe, and oaky. He initially became known for this demonstrative style, at a time where showier wines were fashionable. However, aware that he couldn't hide the terroir influence, Peter Fischer started to make more traditional wines, more pure and closer to their origins.

The Chateau cuvées are full of authenticity, with defined aromas in the Provençal style, and notes of sweet ripe fruit. The Coteaux d'Aix En Provence Chateau Rouge 2013 reveals a beautiful spicy and fruity palate, a truly expressive wine. The mouth is rich and velvety, sustained by peppery tannins. A harmonious balance between a serious wine and one offering immediate pleasure. (15/20)

The vineyard reaches its peak with cuvées like the Grand Blanc and Grand Rouge. The Grand Blanc, with its complex bouquet, is well balanced between weight and

tension, with plenty of minerality and a long persistent finish. It also reveals notes of truffle and spice.

Gastronomic wines

Le Grand Rouge is refined and pure, with more strength and precision. Noticeably rich, it's invigorated by a fresh mineral aroma and a complex palate. At least five or six years aging are suggested to reveal all the facts of this wine.

Grand Rouge:

2012 - 17/20

Very aromatic. Red fruits, rosemary, mint. On the palate the wine is deeply aromatic with notes of cacao and pepper. Spicy tannins. Long liquorice and spicy finish. Long aging potential.

2011 - 17/20

Complex nose with savory notes, spices, and black fruits. A velvety palate with mature fruit. High tones reveal its well balanced and velvety tannins. Cocoa and liquorice finish.

2010 - 16/20

The 2010 opens with noticeable minerality, roasted raspberries and earth. The palate is smooth, aromatic, with lots of peppery tannins. Beautifully spicy finish, but would benefit from additional cellaring.

2007 - 17.5/20

Roasted and candied fruit. Palate is aromatic with secondary notes and supple tannins. Well balanced and full of expression. Ready to drink now.

2005 - 17/20

Candied fruit, balsamic notes and pinewood. Mouth is dense with a structured body, velvet tannins, and a full and spicy palate. A Long and complex finish. Ready to drink.

1997 - 16/20

Reduced nose with notes of smoke, leather, and toasted fruits. Mouth is satiny with a great texture. Fruit aromas are mirrored on the palate with a peppery finish.

1989 - 18/20

Complex nose: roasted red fruits, game, vanilla, forest floor. The mouth is rich, velvety with well blended tannins. Fine length, spicy and mineral finish. Ready to drink.

Le Grand Blanc:

2014 - 16.5/20

Long aging potential. Notes of White peach, linden, licorice, and fresh almond. Bright intense fruit on the palate with notes of almond and nougat.

2013 - 16/20

This vineyard was destroyed by hail, so grapes were bought for this vintage. Dominated by Sauvignon, there are notes of white fruit, mint and spices. Mouth is still tight.

2012 - 17/20

Open nose: White peach really, nougat and honey. Dense mouth with a full and well-balanced body. An elegant finish with almonds and spice. Ready to drink but you can wait.

2011 - 17/20

Notes of crystallized white fruits, verbena, and spice; with a full and supple mouth. A dense vintage but not too heady.

2010 - 18/20

More tight but elegant with complex bouquet. The mouth is well balanced, rich and smooth. A sincere wine.

2008 - 17/20

Honey notes, exotic fruits with pine and truffle. Full and rich on the palate, with a candied finish. Really spicy and open on the finish.

