

Mâconnais

10 Aug 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Palate: Broad, apple whites.

Main grapes: Chardonnay, Aligoté (white); Pinot Noir, Gamay (red).

The Mâconnais, at the southern end of Burgundy and home to an increasing number of seriously competent winemakers, offers some of the best white wine value in the world. Even Côte d'Or producers as illustrious as Leflaive and Lafon have been drawn to invest in its rolling hills. This extensive wine region takes its name from the city of Mâcon and constitutes an intermittent sprawl of vineyards south from the Côte Chalonnaise to the northern limit of [Beaujolais](#). In very broad brushstrokes, its whites, typically sold as **Mâcon Blanc** and all made from Chardonnay grapes, can be attractively round and melon-flavoured and tend to be a much better bet than red wines sold as **Mâcon**, which are usually rather coarse ferments of Gamay grapes since reds made here from Pinot Noir grapes fetch a higher price if sold as AC Bourgogne. **Mâcon Supérieur**, **Mâcon-Villages** and Mâcon with the name of a village appended to is usually a cut above straight Mâcon Blanc and, from winemakers as gifted as André Bonhomme, Olivier Merlin and Jean Thévenet, can be just as thrilling as all but the best whites of the Côte d'Or - at a fraction of the price.

Mâcon-Chardonnay, **Mâcon-Clessé**, **Mâcon-Lugny**, **Mâcon-Viré** and **Viré-Clessé** are all superior white wines named after their village of origin (Chardonnay is the name of a small village in the Mâconnais as well as one of the world's most famous grape varieties). Lugny has a particularly good co-operative, the Cave de Lugny, but the district is a hotbed of ambitious winemaking. Jean Thévenet not only makes extremely serious dry wines for long ageing, but also manages to make a botrytised sweet Mâcon-Clessé. They really do have to try harder here, well south of the Côte d'Or.

The top-quality white-wine Mâconnais vineyards are concentrated in the higher eastern part of the district with a knot of particularly promising vineyards in the far south east close to the northern frontier with Beaujolais. The most notable appellation of all is **Pouilly-Fuissé**, which, despite its mouthful of a name, has become so popular that it frequently sells for more than some humbler Côte d'Or appellations. Some of the wine, such as that made by Domaines Daniel Barraud, Cordier, Corsin, Ferret and Guffens-Heynen, is extremely good, substantial, sometimes slightly honeyed, sometimes noticeably oaked, stuff, but Pouilly-Fuissé is too fashionable a name to offer consistency. **Pouilly-Loché** and **Pouilly-Vinzelles** can also offer some of Pouilly-Fuissé's extra body and are almost indistinguishable from **St-Véran** and the best examples of Beaujolais Blanc, a speciality of the far north of the Beaujolais district.

Some favourite producers: Daniel Barraud, Bret Brothers, Cordier, Croix Senaillet, Robert Denogent, Deux Roches, Ferret, Guffens-Heynen, Les Héritiers du Comte Lafon, Leflaive, Olivier Merlin, Parisse, Rijckaert, Saumaize-Michelin, Talmard, Thévenet, Verget.