

Domaine de la Bêche

Morgon



Domaine de la Bêche was founded deep in the hills of Beaujolais in 1848. Olivier Depardon, the family's 7th generation, took the reins in 1985 with 4 acres of vines and over the years this industrious man increased the domaine's holdings to 69 acres. Most of the vines are in AOP Morgon, followed by Regnié and then Beaujolais-Villages. New equipment has been purchased and a new cellar was built just before the pandemic.

In 2003 Olivier made the decision to de-stem all the fruit and stop working with whole clusters (but without crushing the grapes, thus enabling gentle ferments with a semi-carbonic result). The domaine still uses the 5,000 and 6,000-liter *foudres* that its forefathers used while investing in new ones to fill the new cellar. All fermentations continue to be spontaneous.

In 2013 his son Alexis joined the domaine following enological studies. In 2018, Alexis' older sister Caroline also joined the domaine, and now the commercial side is mostly handled by her and her mother Ghislaine, while the vines and cellar are mostly handled by Olivier and Alexis (with the aid of patriarch Maurice, Olivier's father, who still is out in the vines pruning—apparently much faster than either his son or grandson). But everyone does a bit of everything.

The domaine is unique in the appellation for having vines in all six of Morgon's *climats*. They are Les Charmes, Côte du Py, Corcellette, Douby, Grand Cras, and Micouds, and grapes from each go into the Morgon Vieille Vignes cuvée. In that sense, this cuvée qualifies as the most representative Morgon of all, and it certainly supports the notion that Morgon, along with Moulin-à-Vent, is the densest and longest-lived of the Beaujolais crus.

Locals refer to the appellation's soils as *roche pourrie*, or rotten rock, because it's particularly weathered. It's also iron-rich, which has to do with its diverse geology—the soils here are not simply granitic, but rather a mix, especially around Côte du Py, of schist, granite, and even metamorphosed andesite (the so-called “blue granite” of Côte du Py and of that other extinct volcano, Côte du Brouilly).

Following Brouilly, Morgon is the second largest of Beaujolais' ten crus.

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