

Château de Lavernette

Leynes



The Wines

- *Crémant de Bourgogne*: This comes from the *Vigne de la Roche* vineyard, where Lavernette has 8.5 acres of Chardonnay divided into seven parcels planted between 1984 and 2002. Bertrand used to make this crémant the way most growers make the stuff: he gave the grape must to an *élaboreur*, a specialist in sparkling wine who made and raised the wine in an off-site facility. His son Xavier now makes this *méthode champenoise* wine in-house, and its production is far more artisan than that for most *crémant*. The wine undergoes malolactic naturally, and there is only one small sugar addition, which is done at bottling with the addition of yeast. The wine then ages on its lees for a minimum of eighteen months and as long as twenty-four (a glance at the back label of the bottle in your hand will give you the specific amount of time), a considerably longer period than the nine months typical for most *crémant*. At disgorgement, there is no dosage of sugar; the wine is merely topped off with the same wine from another bottle.
- *Granit Blanc de Noirs*: This is the creation of Xavier and Kerrie, who traveled to Champagne to meet with growers such as Egly-Ouriet, Agrapart, Larmandier Bernier and others for advice before starting this project. The grapes come from the estate Gamay vines growing on granite soils. The wine, a *méthode champenoise*, is made in-house exactly like the *crémant* and rests on its lees *en tirage* for a minimum of 24 months before disgorgement and bottled without dosage. Anyone who may think that Gamay has no business in Champagne method wines needs to take a look at the Aube, where as much as 40% of the vineyard surface was planted to Gamay prior to World War II.
- *Beaujolais Blanc “Vigne de la Roche”*: Coming from the same vineyard as the *crémant*, the vineyard got its name from a layer of white stony chalk under the topsoil. It's worth noting that the first row of vines grows some fifty feet from the Pouilly Fuissé border—and this wine is half the price. This is a fresh, rich Chardonnay that normally has an *élevage* of eighteen months in concrete, giving it a dense complexity. It's also a surprisingly age-worthy wine. Most Beaujolais Blanc comes from vineyards nearer the Saône River in the southern Pierres Dorées region; this is a rare one from the northern end of the appellation.
- *Bourgogne Blanc*: Most of these grapes come from two parcels southwest of the château, supplemented with grapes from Vigne de la Roche. Apart from grape source, this differs from the Beaujolais Blanc by virtue of its granitic soils and by being raised in a combination of neutral barrels and tank.
- *Pouilly-Fuissé “Maison du Villard”*: Lavernette has four old-vine parcels in this *climat*, which spans the flank below the hilltop village of Chaintré. The parcels total four acres, face west, and were planted in 1959, 1964, 1970, and 1971. The wine is raised entirely in tank and drinks very much “on the stone.”

- *Pouilly-Fuissé Cuvée Jean-Jacques de Boissieu*: Jean-Jacques, born 1736, became a finance counselor to the king, but became better known as an engraver whose work can be seen in museums around the world. The stamp used on this label comes from an engraving entitled “The Little Coopers” that he made in 1770. The wine comes from the 1971 parcel of Maison du Villard. It is made in barrel and has more weight and heft than its sibling. By the way, a little-known fact is that on restaurant lists in France in the pre-WWII days, Pouilly-Fuissé commanded the same price as Le Montrachet.
- *Pouilly-Fuissé “Vers Chêne”*: This two-acre parcel grows on a slope near the crest of the hill that forms one side of the bowl of Fuissé. The high side of the parcel borders the forest while the lower side borders a peach orchard, and the vines grow in a small amphitheater. It's a cool, late-ripening calcareous site that is always the last parcel the family harvest. The vines average about 40 years of age and the wine's élevage typically lasts 22 months in barrel, which is mostly old (for 2015, 20% of the wood was new, a high percentage reflecting the ripe vintage). This is very much of a wine that drinks on the stone, full of underpinning minerality. Production averages 400 cases.
- *Beaujolais Le Jeune*: Le Jeune began life as Lavernette's nouveau, and to a real extent it's still made in that spirit--a young wine made to celebrate the harvest, which is a worthy endeavor indeed to celebrate. This comes from one hectare of vines planted in the domaine's clos in 2016. Maceration is short, extraction is light, and the wine ferments whole cluster with indigenous yeast in concrete vats. Élevage is a short two months, and the wine is made and bottled without SO₂. The whole aim is to have a fresh wine full of explosive Gamay fruit, vibrant and full of life. Production is held to 300-400 cases each year.
- *Beaujolais-Villages*: Lavernette has nearly 16 acres of Gamay, all growing just south of the château on a granite slope. Of these acres, the younger blocks planted between the mid-nineteen sixties to the mid-eighties go into the classic Beaujolais-Villages cuvée. Normally, the percentage of whole clusters in the ferments dominate but there usually is some de-stemmed fruit too, and how much varies according to the vintage. This cuvée is raised entirely in concrete vats for a minimum of ten months.

Lavernette's granite soils have a good amount of clay, more than what's usually found in Beaujolais. This makes for fuller-bodied wines (clay typically translates into tannin for reds; think Pommard as opposed to Volnay). In an 1894 reference book on the region's wines, Leynes' red was reputed to be highly esteemed, with good color and structure, and a 15 to 20-year life span!

- *Beaujolais-Leynes “Le Clos”*: This comes from the château's best parcels of Gamay, 4.2 acres of *sélection massale* vines that were planted in 1957, 1961 and 1967, and grow in a walled vineyard. Leynes is one of thirty-nine villages entitled to use their names within the Beaujolais-Villages appellation. Normally, the majority of the grapes going into the ferments are destemmed, but the proportion of destemmed vs whole cluster is dictated by a given year and its conditions. Leynes is made traditionally in older barrels, racked only at bottling, and never fined.