

Domaine Jean-Luc Mouillard

Jura



Jean-Luc Mouillard was born in Nevy-sur-Seille at the foot of the oft-photographed Château-Chalon. The château has morphed into a village as well as into Jura's most respected appellation for *vin jaune*, and it occupies the top of a huge limestone outcropping. Nevy-sur-Seille, as the name suggests, sits far below on the valley floor alongside the small Seille River. An old stone bridge crosses the Seille at Nevy, and it's this bridge that graces the labels of Jean-Luc's wines.

Jean-Luc grew up on the family's dairy farm, which happened to have a few vineyard parcels on the side whose harvest was sold to the local co-op. After enology school, he established a domaine in 1991, renting several parcels and planting several others. Today he farms twenty-seven acres of vines (up from the twenty stated on old back labels that may still be seen on bottles)

in three appellations: Côte du Jura, L'Etoile, and Château-Chalon, and normally 80% of his production is in white wine. The bulk of the vines are in the AOC of Côte du Jura for Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Poulsard and Trousseau, and all of his vines grow right around 1,000 feet in elevation. The farming ethic had been one of *lutte raisonnée*, or pragmatically sustainable (the use of herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers were abandoned many years previously). Then the domaine embarked on organic farming in 2020 and became certified in 2023. As for cellar work, it's hands off: spontaneous ferments and no additions save SO₂, and in general the total is kept under 50 ppm.

In 1997 Jean-Luc moved north from Nevy-sur-Seille to the village of Mantry upon buying a sixteenth-century house that originally served as a stagecoach stop. The motivation was the building's stone cellar, an arched under-ground affair that became a place of beauty once Jean-Luc stripped off all the stucco that had been applied to the stone at a later date. Here is where he ages wine in barrel. In 2005 he constructed a one-story building across the street for his fermentations, and in 2014 he built a facility to house a bottling line and to store bottled wine.

Thus, through dint of focus and hard work, Jean-Luc has created a serious artisan domaine that produces up to 55,000 bottles or 9,000 six-pack cases per year. His wife Annie runs the office and their son Mathieu has joined the domaine. Mathieu did an internship in the Mâconnais and then at Pierre Gaillard's domaine in Faugères following his enological studies, and officially started with his father in 2018.

The Jura is sandwiched between Switzerland and Burgundy, and its vineyard area is the first upland between the Bresse Plain and the Jura Mountains. The lower slopes have more clay to go with marl; the higher slopes have more limestone, much like Burgundy's Côte d'Or on the other side of the vast plain. The influence of the Alps ensures that Jura's climate is decidedly more continental than Burgundy's, and winters can be quite cold. Vines are trained high for added protection against frost. Harvest typically runs well into October.

This is an ancient grape-growing region whose wine was referenced in 80 AD by Pliny the Younger. The early 19th century supported close to 50,000 acres of vines. Largely because of the phylloxera epidemic, the total today is some 4,700 acres (2014 acreage census) in an appellation that allows for as much as 27,000 acres to be planted. The earlier century supported a far greater diversity of vines too—42 different kinds, according to one count—whereas today five varieties dominate. Chardonnay is the most important at 43% of the total vineyard surface and came from Burgundy with its sibling Pinot Noir as long ago as the 10th century. Savagnin, a distinctive wine prized for vin jaune, accounts for 22% of the vineyards; Poulsard, aka Ploussard, adds up to 14%; Pinot Noir for 13%; and Trousseau for 8% (these varietal percentages come from a census taken in 2000).

<http://www.domainemouillard.com>