

## WINE Talk: May 2024

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 123

Welcome to newsletter 123, the fifth WINE Talk Newsletter for 2024. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them!

We have been able to put together **7** packs to offer in this newsletter, but some of these packs have only one or two available, so we expect them to sell out quickly.

The newsletter also has:

- A brief summary about wines that have recently arrived;
- Some information about wines which are arriving soon – Domaine du Gringet;
- Part 2 of our faults in wine and what causes them story for this month is – more acid chemicals that can cause faults in wine;
- A story about the frosts that have been ravaging vineyards in France this year;
- Can natural wines be kept to mature?;
- Grape variety - Savagnin;
- A story about Jura wine appellations that permit Vin Jaune to be created.

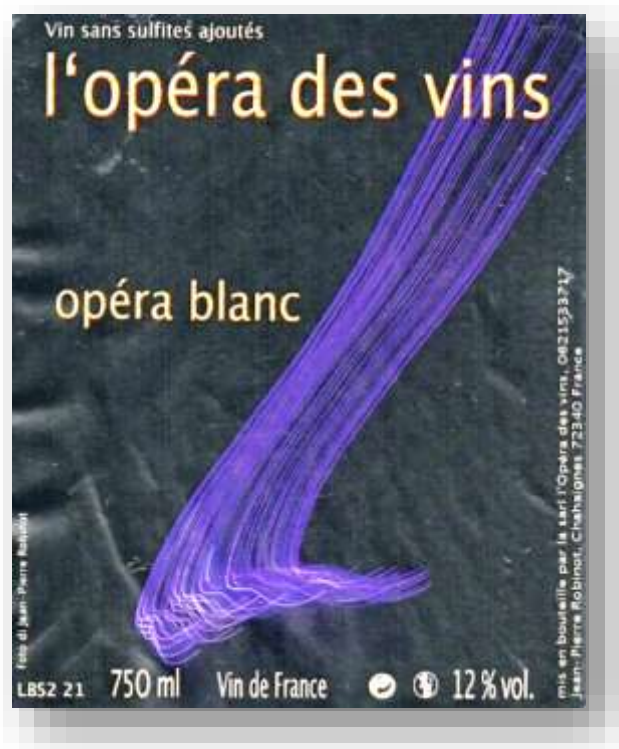
For a full list of wines currently in stock and their prices see:

<https://livingwines.com.au/shop/>

There's an easy way to order our wines. Just send us an email listing the wines and/or packs you would like to order or even just a budget and your style and region preferences. We confirm a plan by return email before processing your order.

If you're not personally known to us or haven't already, please also provide your date of birth so we stay legal (a requirement of Tasmanian legislation). You must of course be over 18 years of age to order.

## New Arrivals



The new arrival situation is very limited. As foreshadowed in the last newsletter we have just released some **Fanny Sabre** wines. There are some packs for sale in this newsletter but apart from them we have sold out of all the wines except for Beaune Rouge Clos des Renardes 2022, which is \$148 a bottle.

Our other new arrivals, which we are offering by allocation at the moment are wines from Jean-Pierre and Noella Robinot, and their daughter Juliette. If you have asked for an offer and haven't received one yet you should get an email over the coming days. It's a slow process. There are also a few packs in this newsletter with some wines we set aside for newsletter customers who haven't asked for an allocation.

We did, however, decide to advertise a few bottles of one cuvée, because it is a repeat delivery of the same vintage of a wine which most people had an allocation of last year. Called Opéra Blanc, it is a négoce wine made with Chenin Blanc from 30 year old vines on complex terroir of clay, silex and limestone in Anjou. From the 2021 vintage it was directly pressed, aged in fibreglass tanks and bottled early in July 2022. It's recognisably a Robinot wine, with its typical energy, but with a little more freshness and less oxidative characteristics. It is \$78 a bottle and limited to single bottle orders.

## What's Coming

In June the only wine we will be releasing is Dominique Belluard's final sparkling wine, his Ayse Mont Blanc Brut Nature 2019. It will be a poignant moment but is also of course a celebration of his life. We cannot wait to open the first bottle. The pricing will be similar to entry-level grower

Champagnes. It's not helped by the cost of collecting single not-quite-full pallets from remote regions of the Savoie.

This photo (borrowed from google – we should have our own soon) gives you an idea. It is the new home for Domaine du Gringet's winery. Domaine du Gringet is the estate created by Vincent Ruiz and his partners who bought Dominique Belluard's vines and the new winery is just a few minutes from the Belluard family home, where the winery was previously located, and even closer to Dominique's iconic Le Feu vineyard.



The arrivals immediately after that are wines we have mentioned in a previous newsletter – Geschickt and Mataburro. We will be advertising **Geschickt** and allocating **Mataburro** so now would be a good time to indicate interest if you would like an offer. It won't be until some time after July.

From August things become interesting with quite a few arrivals that are going to keep us very busy deep in our allocation spreadsheets. We have orders scheduled from **Adeline Houillon and Renaud Bruyère, Domaine Bornard, and Alice and Olivier de Moor**, all of which we will be allocating. We will probably also allocate **La Petite Empreinte**. This is the estate of Mélissa Bazin et Romain De Moor, Alice and Olivier's son. The small collection of wines we are receiving from them are either red or rosé so a nice complement to the white cuvées we receive from Alice and Olivier.

To set expectations, our one pallet shipment from Adeline and Renaud is a smaller allocation than last year so any offers will be commensurately smaller too. There are also more white wines than red wines this time, and the shipment has tiny quantities of many cuvées. So don't be surprised if you have asked for an offer if we then offer you something different from what someone else posts on Instagram. We have even less wine from Tony Bornard –just a small pallet – and these wines are predominantly red. Similarly, the quantities are small, and we will not be able to offer everyone every cuvée.

And just in time for summer we should also be advertising the first of the **Mosse** family's 2023 wines including Bangarang Nouveau, Bangarang, and Bisou. We'll also be releasing some 2022

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Chenin Blancs and 2022 La Joute (the Chardonnay cuvée). And there will be wines from the **Montanet** family, including La Cadette Vézelay Châtelaine 2023, and under their La Soeur Cadette label, Juliéas 2023, Bourgogne Rouge 2023, and Bourgogne Blanc 2023.

There's a lot to look forward to. However, it's highly likely we won't mention the expected arrival of the allocation wines we've highlighted here again. We like to give everyone a chance to request an allocation, which is what this issue of the newsletter is giving by mentioning their imminent arrival and we will welcome your interest, but it's also a very big challenge to share the wines fairly so the fewer requests we deal with the simpler life is! It doesn't mean you can't ask at any time up until when we do the allocations. We just won't be reminding you again.

**Pack 1: Fanny Sabre Pack (15% Discount)**

**3 Packs Only**



Our Fanny Sabre wines came and went – so quickly! The only wine we have left from our recent shipment is the 2022 Beaune Rouge Clos des Renardes and then only a few bottles.

However, to make sure at least some were available for newsletter readers, we set aside three packs with 2 bottles of each of her most beloved wines.

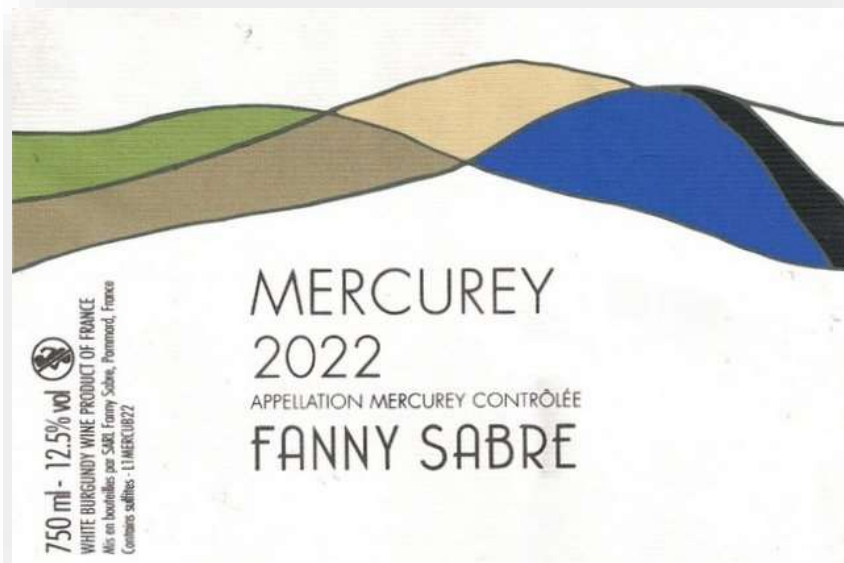
It is 2 bottles each of the 2022 vintages of her Bourgogne Aligoté, Bourgogne Blanc and Bourgogne Rouge. None of these wines are now available for general sale unless the packs are not sold in the next couple of weeks.

- Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Rouge 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2022 **(2 bottles)**

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$494.00 but the pack price is only \$419.90. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.**

**Pack 2: Fanny Sabre Premium Arrivals + an Aligoté Pack (15% Discount)**

**1 Pack Only**



We'd recommend skipping past this one if your wine budget is stretched and you don't want to be tempted.

The prices of Burgundy wines continue to rise – we suspect as much because of the impact of the weather in recent years as demand – and we unfortunately have to pass them on.

We received four village cuvées and one 1er Cru cuvée in this shipment, so it seemed like the makings of a perfect pack. There were three reds (the Pommard, Beaune 1er Cru Les Chouacheux and Beaune Rouge Clos des Renardes) and two whites (Mercurey Blanc and Beaune Blanc Clos des Renardes) so we thought the Aligoté, which is drinking very deliciously, would be a nice bottle to round it out to 6 bottles.

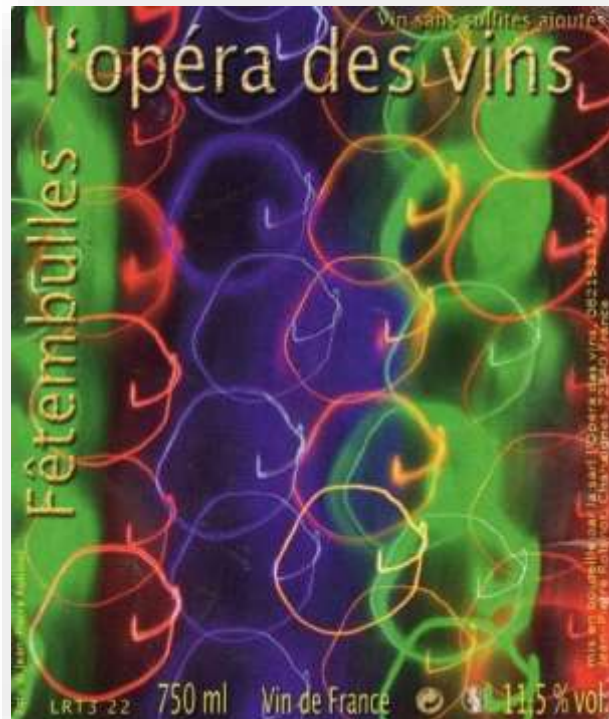
All of the wines in this pack are no longer available to purchase generally except for the Beaune Rouge Clos des Renardes 2022. However, if the pack does not sell in a couple of weeks we will release them individually or put them in other packs next month so it's possible to buy a Fanny Sabre or two in a mixed pack with other wines.

- Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2022
- Fanny Sabre Mercurey Blanc 2022
- Fanny Sabre Beaune Blanc Clos des Renardes 2022
- Fanny Sabre Beaune Rouge Clos des Renardes 2022
- Fanny Sabre Beaune 1er Cru Les Chouacheux Rouge 2022
- Fanny Sabre Pommard 2022

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$842.00 but the pack price is only \$715.70. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.**

**Pack 3: Robinot Pet Nat Pack + more (10% discount)**

**1 Pack Only**



We have been allocating a new shipment of Robinot wines and have set aside a few to include in packs.

This pack 3 is pet-nat heavy with 2 bottles of each cuvée – (Fêtembulles, which is 100% Chenin Blanc) and the rosé (Les Années Folles, which is a blend of the two estate varieties - Chenin Blanc and Pineau d’Aunis, and probably the most delicious vintage we have ever had).

They are both from the 2022 vintage and such a pleasurable way to start or finish a meal. The other two are both estate wines – one bottle of Bistrologie (Chenin Blanc) and one bottle of Regard (Pineau d’Aunis), both from the 2021 vintage and from some of the younger vines. The discount is 10% - the same as the allocation offers where customers buy 6 bottles. These wines are only otherwise available by allocation.

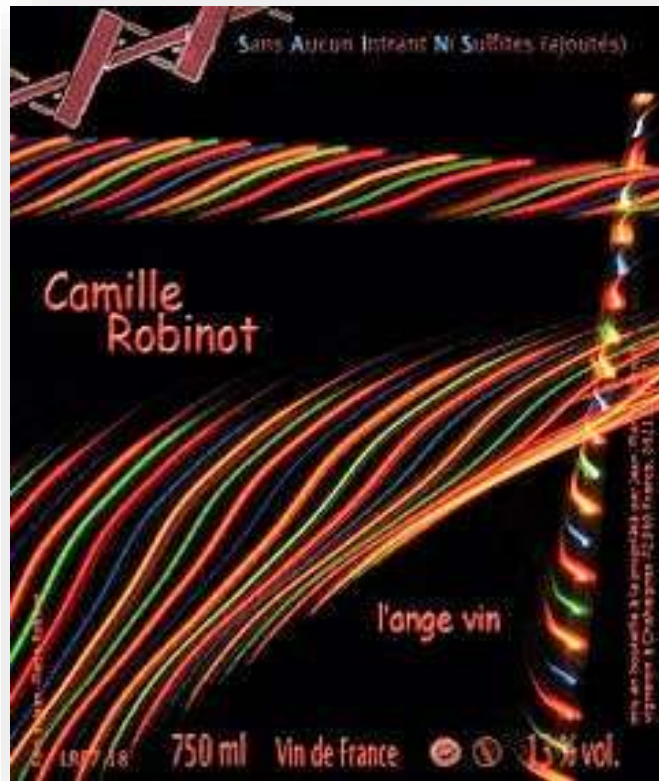
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Fêtembulles 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Années Folles 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Regard 2021
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Bistrologie 2021

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$468.00 but the pack price is only \$421.20. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.**



**Pack 4: Robinot Cellaring Pack of 3 Bottles (10% Discount)**

**1 Pack Only**



We had some success last month by offering some smaller packs of special (and expensive) bottles so we've done it again this month.

This pack has 3 of Jean-Pierre and Noella's most prized estate wines – 2 Pineau d'Aunis (Nocturne and Camille) and l'Iris, perhaps the most asked-about Chenin Blanc they make. If you have patience each of these would reward cellaring.

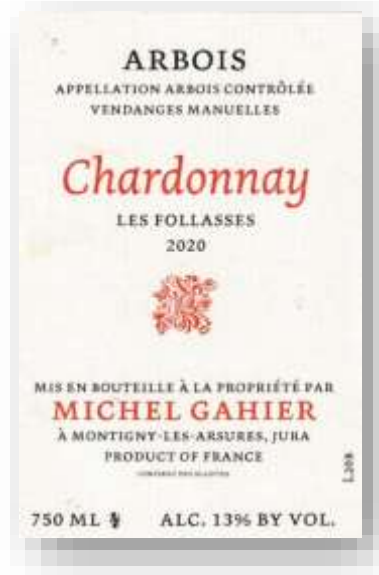
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Iris 2021
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Nocturne 2021
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Camille 2018

**The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$496.00 but the pack price is only \$446.40. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.**



**Pack 5: Mainly Robinot Chenin Blanc + Other Delicious White Things Pack  
(Approximately 11% Discount)**

**2 Packs Only**



Three of the wines in this pack are Jean-Pierre and Noella Robinot Chenin Blancs, each quite different. Fêtebulles is a pet-nat. If you have had bad experiences with pet-nats don't worry. This one opens cleanly (it has been disgorged) and there is no loss with wine fizzing out of the bottle. The fizz is beautifully controlled. There are two still whites. L'Iris is an estate wine and Lumière de Silex is négoce. Both are from the 2021 vintage and with similar winemaking (directly-pressed and aged in old barrels) so the differences will be a reflection of terroir and viticulture. On our price list Lumière de Silex is listed as \$92 a bottle and l'Iris is \$119. As the price implies l'Iris has a little more depth and would be the wine to keep.

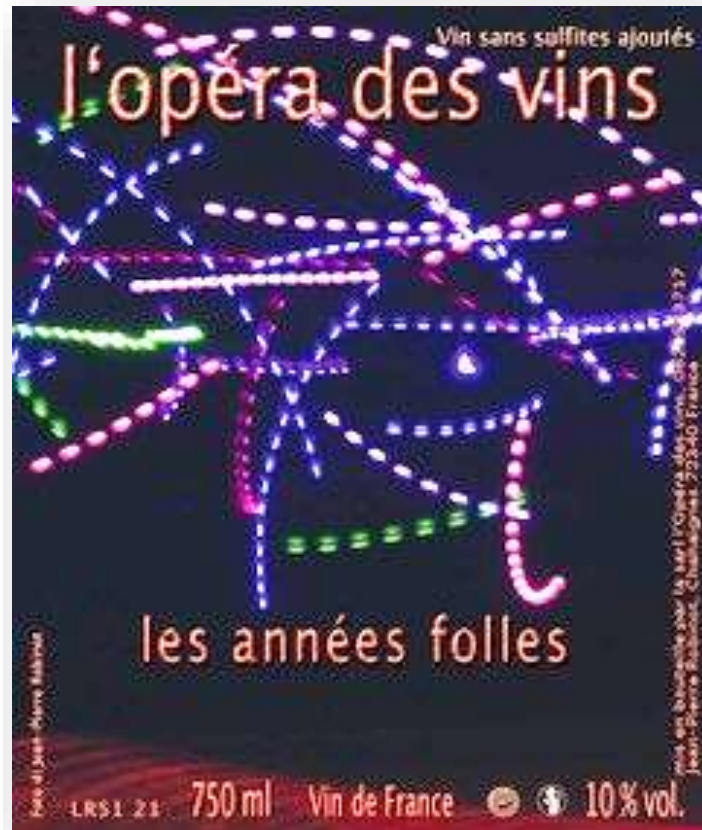
To finish this pack we have added three more still white wines. One is Michel Gahier's Arbois 2020 Les Follasses (the B version which we only released this year). It's an allocation-only wine which we have a few spare bottles of. The final two bottles are wines that are currently available, both from Julien Altaber – his Bourgogne Blanc 2022 and Bourgogne Aligoté. Les Follasses and Altaber's Sextant Bourgogne Blanc are made with Chardonnay and the final wine is, of course given its appellation, Aligoté.

- Jean-Pierre Robinot Fêtebulles 2022
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Lumière de Silex 2021
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Iris 2021
- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Follasses B 2020
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Blanc 2022
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Aligoté 2022

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$500.00 but the pack price is only \$442.95. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.**

**Pack 6: How Did That Happen Pack (Approx. 10% discount)**

**1 Pack Only**



This pack literally named itself “How did that happen” when we discovered we’d ended up with a spare bottle of Bruyère-Houillon wine from last year’s shipment. There are lots of reasons why it can happen – usually when someone only takes part of an offer or we give up waiting for them to reply – but usually we immediately reoffer it to someone else. This must have happened after we had moved on from looking at the allocations for these wines regularly. It was an incentive to have a look around and see what had happened with recent arrivals. We found a new Domaine Derain Bourgogne Aligoté which had sold out but then something went wrong with a reservation and the wine didn’t go but we had long removed it from the list and unfortunately turned away subsequent orders without keeping a record. We try to keep a note in case this happens but must have been sure these wines were definitely sold. The end result was a stranded asset.

We also found some other allocation wines with spare bottles too - a bottle of last year’s release of Robinot Les Années Folles, a Gahier Trousseau and Chardonnay and, finally, one of our rarest wines, Cartouche by Arnaud Griener. Farming less than 1 hectare Arnaud works full time for Etienne Thiebaud of Domaine des Cavarodes. His tiny production is his weekend work. This is his one red cuvée, a blend of Pinot Noir (mainly), Poulsard, and Trousseau.

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These are the wines:

- Renaud Bruyère and Adeline Houillon Arbois Blanc Chardonnay Croix-Rouge 2018
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Années Folles 2021
- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Follasses B 2020
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Le Clousot 2022
- Domaine Derain Bourgogne Aligoté 2022
- Arnaud Greiner La Cartouche 2022

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$454.00 but the pack price is only \$405.45. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.**

## Pack 7: May Sale Pack (Slightly more than 25% discount)



This pack is a very varied collection of wines, all highly discounted so we, like most retailers at this time of year, can get into some of the spirit of end of financial year sales. It seemed especially important this month because the other packs are all so expensive.

This pack has 6 very different wines from six different regions. Five are made with single varieties, all different, and one has 8 varieties! Some are familiar (like the Cabernet Franc) and some less so (like the Jacquère from the Savoie).

We're also willing to bet you haven't drunk a wine which is a blend of 50% Merlot, with 15% Syrah, 15% Muscat de Hambourg, and also Terret Bourret, Alicante Bouschet, Muscat à Petits Grains Blanc, Chardonnay, and Grenache Gris. Despite the presence of three white grapes this wine is probably the darkest, inkiest red we have had for a long time. We cannot fully explain, except by mentioning he has a unique sense of humour, why Wim Wagemans chose to use Shiraz (the Australian name for this grape) as part of the name of a wine which has 8 different varieties, including only 15% Syrah and where the dominant grape is Merlot. The label and the rest of the name is inspired by a friend in Antwerp who made him discover the joys of coffee.

They are all still wines (although there is a bit of a prickle in some of them, especially Zac). There are 2 reds, 2 whites and 2 macerated wines. Some are quite classic, like Cinabre, Domaine de la Garrelière's premier Cabernet Franc. The Geschickt Wineck-Schlossberg is a compelling macerated wine. And a few are quite wild, like Karnage's Zac, made with Mauzac from the south-west. It is bottled with a crown seal, but it is essentially still.

The l'Octavin wine is from a box which had a bottle broken while getting the pallet from Melbourne to us resulting in the remaining labels being slightly, but not severely, stained so it has a slightly bigger discount.

Below is a summary of what's in the pack, including each variety and where the wines come from.

| Wine  | Region     | Type      | Variety   |
|---|------------|-----------|---|
| Domaine Derain Allez Goutons Blanc 2022                     | Burgundy   | White     | Aligoté   |
| Karnage Zak 2020  | South-West | White     | Mauzac  |
| Domaine de la Garrelière Touraine Cinabre 2018              | Loire      | Red       | Cabernet Franc  |
| Le Bouc à Trois Pattes French Press Shiraz 2021             | Languedoc  | Red       | Merlot (50%), Syrah, Muscat de Hambourg, Terret Bourret, Alicante Bouschet, Muscat à Petits Grains Blanc, Chardonnay, Grenache Gris |
| Geschickt Alsace Grand Cru Wineck-Schlossberg Riesling 2020 | Alsace     | Macerated | Riesling  |
| l'Octavin Joker 2021 (label lightly stained)                | Savoie     | Macerated | Jacquère  |

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$398.00 but the pack price is only **\$294.85**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

## French Spring Disasters

Sadly, we have had many reports of devastating frosts which we fear are going to mean many people have little to no vintage again this year. There are some bright spots – in the Loire they seem to have escaped without catastrophic impact but in the Jura, the Savoie and parts of Burgundy it is a repeat of recent disasters, and perhaps even worse because there were many more consecutive days with morning temperatures below freezing.

As if on cue, as April arrived our Instagram posts were full of photos of the first budding, in many cases 2 or 3 weeks earlier than usual after another mild winter. And then, also as if on cue, the weather forecasts for towns like Arbois, Angers, Beaune and others we keep at hand started to predict the dreaded forecasts of minimums of less than 0 degrees.

You track it many days ahead and hope the forecast will change. We can only imagine the sinking hearts of the people we work with who were living this unfolding disaster not just watching it from afar once the forecasts predicted the worst. This year nothing got better, in fact as time went on it got worse.

An [Instagram post from Domaine du Gringet](#), which is in French, tells their heartbreaking story in some depth. Their growing cycle was at least three weeks ahead of normal by April 18 when they began a battle against frost, and it went through until April 25.

In their lower-altitude plots, where the budding was more advanced, they have lost 100% of the potential crop, despite fighting it by burning piles of straw in the early mornings.

They have of course started to analyse the consequences for their young business and to try to work out how to make it more resilient. For them one learning is the need to acquire and plant more vines on higher plots – even a small increase in altitude can make a difference to when budburst begins.

They had also been working on increasing grass cover to increase soil fertility, but extra grass amplifies the frost damage so, if they are to continue that, they need to be sufficiently equipped to be able to mow their entire vineyard at least 48 hours before the onset of a frost.

Straw burning, they have decided, is relatively ineffective and also very unpopular. (Having been in Arbois once during a night of frost we can understand why it is unpopular. The whole town and surrounding countryside were choked with smoke.)

We've put some photos from their Instagram post here – first fighting the frost and then its consequences. There are more if you visit their post. We encourage you to visit the source.





#### Fighting the Frost at Domaine du Gringet and the heartbreaking consequences

All over France people are considering their options wondering how to sustain their livelihoods given late frosts are so frequent. The Belluard vines were frozen in 2017, 2019 and now 2024. In the Jura it was these years and 2021 as well. It is similar in almost every grape growing region. Only the south escapes although in 2021 many southern vineyards were also touched by frost.

Our friend Libby Travers has recently written at length on the subject of why frost is such an insidious enemy in one of the missives she regularly writes on behalf of Giorgio de Maria Fun Wines.

Living in France she has seen how terrible this spring has been at first hand. Her story goes into a lot of detail about the interaction between frost and budding vines, how exactly the damage is done and how much it costs to fight it.

Rather than paraphrase what Libby has written we'd encourage you to read the full story. The link is here - <https://www.giorgiodemaria.com/april-il-mensile-the-month-that-was>. And, the internet, being the rabbit hole that it is, can also take you to a story about the longer-term issues if you click on a link in Libby's article to an abstract of a scientific paper called *The risk of tardive frost damage in French vineyards in a changing climate*.

Perhaps the most heart-breaking thing about all this is that if our politicians had been stronger 30 or 40 years ago to stand up to the climate change deniers and fossil fuel lobbyists then, like they collectively fought the hole in the ozone layer, they could probably have made decisions that meant we could have avoided this situation. What was needed to fight this war was known.

We're writing this in Hobart on the verge of winter whether the days this week, apart from their shortness, have felt more like early summer or perhaps winter in Sydney, not normal weather in our southerly outpost. It's hard not to be fearful of what's ahead of us, especially for all the people we know whose livelihood is dependent on the climate.

For 2024, the subsequent weather has not helped either. There have been frequent strong spring storms, including hail, in many grape-growing regions. We know from what has happened to the de Moors in the past that storms immediately after frost damage are particularly harsh on the already-weakened vines and further reduce potential yields, often for the following year as well. So, it is with a lot of trepidation that we wait for news as the season develops.

For us it obviously means there will be less wine from many people once the 2024 vintage is ready for sale. It might also mean that some people hold back 2022 and 2023 wines to try to even out their incomes so the impact on availability could come sooner than you might think.

In the worst cases there may be no wine from this vintage, as happened to Michel Gahier in 2021 when the combination of frost and disease meant there were insufficient grapes to make a harvest worthwhile, for the first time for him. Because he fills many of his large old barrels with the new wine immediately after bottling what was in them, it also meant he kept some 2020 wines for longer than he normally would.

It will also almost certainly mean more price increases too. So many of the costs to look after a vineyard are fixed. They occur whether or not there are grapes to harvest. Inevitably growers susceptible to frost will increase prices during the years when they have a good harvest to help them recover from or prepare for years like 2024.

The news is not all catastrophic. We never cease to be amazed at the optimism of the people we work with and their sanguine acceptance of what nature throws at them. The google translation of the final paragraph on Domaine du Gringet's post is:

*After these events, we are certainly sad and tired but above all determined to perpetuate this wonderful adventure at Domaine du Gringet. We're crossing our fingers that the off-buds [not a great translation but we think the meaning is clear] will give us some grapes, especially if there's rain. In this, we trust the Ardèche saying that "Rain cures frost".*

There has been plenty of rain so perhaps we will have some good news from them when we finally meet them in July.

And that rain has also been strongly welcomed everywhere, particularly in the south of France, which has been in almost permanent drought for several years, with rainfall well below average. It augurs well for a good vintage in the south in 2024, although there are another few months where things could go wrong.

No doubt there are many more stories to come as news of the damage from the spring of 2024 is digested. We're about to visit many people we work with and will look forward to sharing news via the newsletter. We know many of you are interested in knowing how the vigneronnes and vignerons are faring as well as about their wines and we are grateful for that interest.

## Can You Keep Natural Wines?

Many wine drinkers seem to ascribe things to natural wines that they would violently object to if we said the same thing about more conventional wines. Probably the most common “truism” that these people espouse is that if sulphites haven’t been used then the wine won’t last.

We were first shown the fallacy of this thinking by the famous Burgundian producer Dominique Derain whose wines we started importing over a decade ago. Dominique was a key figure in the promotion of natural, no sulphur wines and practised what he preached in the wines he created from his plots in and around Saint Aubin.

On our first visit to his winery he took us through a tasting of his recent vintages to introduce his portfolio of available and soon to be released wines. At the end of the tasting he disappeared into underground cellar and came back up with a bottle of wine that turned out to be 25 years old.

It was absolutely beautiful and we had a lovely time sipping this wine before continuing to our next appointment. We quizzed Dominic about whether he had added any sulphites and he assured us that he never used any. The wine had spent an extended time in old oak barrels, and this was partly the answer to the wine’s long life in such good condition.



This was confirmed some years later when we visited another producer who also never added sulphites to his wine – namely Jean-Pierre Robinot. When we walked through his underground cellars carved into the side of a hill near his winery, we saw his wines in very old oak barrels allowing the absorption of oxygen into the wine.

The reason we have written these words is that recently we attended a small gathering to celebrate a friend who had bought his first house. We took along a bottle of wine made by Jean-Pierre in 2002!!!

It is a Vouvray, therefore it is made with Chenin Blanc grapes. This wine had only arrived in Australia a few weeks ago, with the Robinot

family only recently releasing the wine. It was, as the saying goes, “as fresh as a daisy”!

It was complex, it was energetic and it was delicious. It certainly had lasted despite (or because) it being a completely natural wine.

There is a scientific reason for the lasting ability of natural wines without the use of sulphites being added and it relates to the effect of oxygen on the tannins in wine which Derain and Robinot intrinsically understand. The same process is used in the Jura by most of the winemakers to craft their Vin Jaune (see story below) which remains in the barrel in the presence of oxygen for at least 7 years. We will write a story about the science in a forthcoming newsletter.

## Wine Faults – Part 2 More Acids

Last month we wrote about the first of the wine faults in this series namely excess acetic acid which is the root cause of the fault known as volatile acidity. This month we briefly look at other acids which can cause unpleasant tastes in wine.

In this story we are going to mention lactic acid, succinic acid, fumaric acid, butyric acid, tartaric acid, and propionic acid as just a few of the other acids which can spoil a wine if they are present in high levels.

Now, we need to provide a warning here. The presence of any acid in wine is not necessarily a fault. In fact, acids can make a wine more attractive if present in low levels. It is only when they are present in high levels that they are a problem.

In fact, acids are very useful in a wine, particularly in protecting a wine from microbial infection as Doug Nierman from UC Davis in the United States points out in an article he wrote called What's in a Wine?

The following is a quote from his article:

*Acids are major wine constituents and contribute greatly to its taste. In fact, acids impart the sourness or tartness that is a fundamental feature in wine taste. Wines lacking in acid are "flat." Chemically the acids influence titratable acidity which affects taste and pH which affects color, stability to oxidation, and consequently the overall lifespan of a wine. The most abundant of these acids arise in the grapes themselves and carry over into the wine. However, there are also some acids that arise as a result of the fermentation process from either yeast and/or bacteria.*

So, most of the acids are present in the grape and some, such as succinic acid, are added during the fermentation process through the actions of yeast and bacteria.

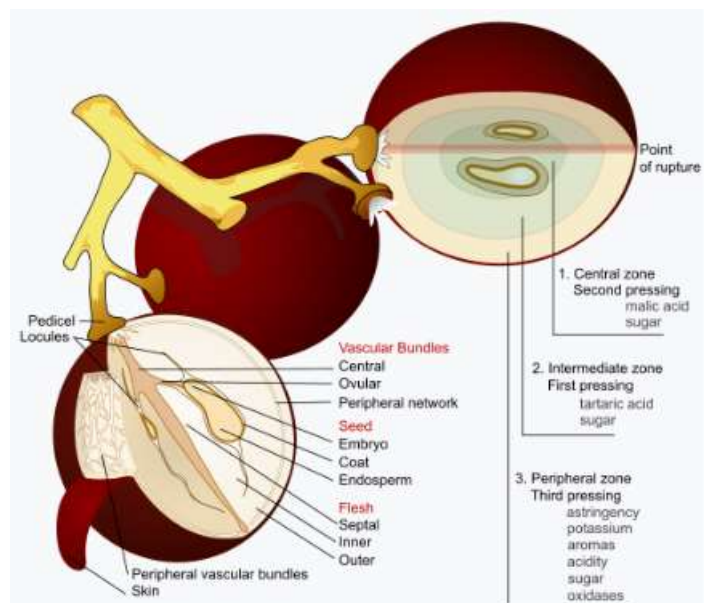
Nierman also mentions in his article that in the USA it is legal to add fumaric acid during the fermentation process. This acid has the formula  $C_4H_4O_4$  and adds an extra fruitiness to the wine. This would not be used by natural wine producers. As a side note fumaric acid has also been associated with liver damage.

We will now provide a short description of each of the acids we have mentioned above and noticeable benefits and problems:

- Lactic acid is created when the wine undergoes malolactic fermentation which converts malic acid into lactic acid in the presence of lactic acid bacteria thus providing a smoother taste to the wine.
- Succinic acid is an organic acid ( $C_2H_3O_2$ ) produced by yeasts during the early stages of alcoholic fermentation and acts as an intermediary in important metabolic pathways. Note that it is a perfectly normal result of the fermentation process. However, there

may be some natural yeast strains that can cause higher than desirable amounts of this acid to be generated during the fermentation process<sup>1</sup>.

- Fumaric acid can be added to wine in the USA as mentioned above. It is used to reduce the effect of lactic acid bacteria for those who don't like their wines "going through malo". Natural wine producers would not use this acid as it is a fine powder regarded as an external addition to the winemaking process. It is sometimes used by commercial producers to inhibit malolactic fermentation.
- Butyric acid can clearly be classified as a fault which may be due to fermentation within the grapes prior to pressing. It produces a flavour akin to rancid butter. Note that butyric acid can add to the total volatile acidity reading for a wine. Butyric acid taint is closely related to lactic acid taint in wine.
- Tartaric acid occurs naturally in grapes and is an important chemical in the preservation of wines and maintaining the chemical stability of wines. It is sometimes added to wines in the form of cream of tartar. The natural presence of tartaric acid helps to maintain the colour of the wine and has some influence over the taste of the wine.
- Propionic acid is one of the class of fatty acids which are produced most often by *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, one of the most common yeasts added to wine or naturally present in the yeasts brought in from the vineyard. Note that propionic acid can add to the total volatile acidity reading for a wine.



Location of some natural acids in grapes

<sup>1</sup> Coulter, A. D. et al (2004) Succinic acid – How it is formed, what is its effect on titratable acidity, and what factors influence its concentration in wine? Aust NZ Wine Ind J 19(6) 16-20, 22-25.



## Grape variety – Savagnin

We have written about Savagnin in a previous newsletter (July 2014) which is almost ten years ago and we have learned more about this important variety (particularly for the Jura) since then.

Savagnin is unusual because it has been used in France and northern Italy to make wine for thousands of years. Some records go back to the time of Julius Cesar in the first century BCE who fought his way to the northern areas of France and even has a grape found in that area named after him (César from the Yonne department, which we wrote about in the May 2020 issue of this newsletter).

Scientists have recently been examining ancient refuse from villages throughout France and have found places where grape must (particularly the seeds) has been “dumped” after pressing grapes for winemaking.

Scientific analysis of the DNA of these seeds shows that it is related to the Traminer grape family. The DNA tests were carried out on seeds that were found in France and were dated to 900 years ago.

These grape varieties gained popularity and spread across Europe, leading to the emergence of different regional variations. This has been documented in an article published in the journal *Nature Plants* by Nathan Wales<sup>2</sup> and colleagues.

The grape adapted to the specific terroirs of different regions, resulting in various names such as Gewürztraminer in Alsace in north eastern France (aromatic and pink-skinned), Savagnin Blanc (aromatic and green-skinned), and Savagnin Rose (pink-skinned) in the Jura in eastern France.

We also have two of our producers in France who are not in the Jura who have planted Savagnin outside this area. Our friends at Domaine Milan in Provence have planted Savagnin immediately in front of Henri’s house and the Mosse family in the Loire Valley have also planted Savagnin in their Bonnes Blanches vineyard. We are looking forward to receiving the first bottlings of wines made from these plantings.

It is a very old grape variety and the parentage of the grape is yet to be determined, possibly because it is descended from an extinct variety or from a wild variety which has not had DNA sampling carried out.

One of the important characteristics of the Savagnin grape is that it is capable of developing a high sugar content while ripening while also maintaining high acidity.

We have found many references to Savagnin in a book published in France in 1857 (M DCCC LVII) called *Ampélographie Française* by Victor Rendu. Interestingly, there are as many references to a red variety (Savagnin Noir) which seems to have disappeared from France’s vineyards. There are also references to Savagnin Vert (green) and Savagnin Jaune (yellow).

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<sup>2</sup> Wales, N et al (2019) *Palaeogenomic insights into the origins of French grapevine diversity*. *Nature Plants* volume 5, pages 595–603.



He also praises the area around Chateau Chalon (which is 25 kilometres South-West of Arbois) as being perfect for growing Savagnin for both the production of white wines and for the famous Vin Jaune which can only be made from Savagnin.

Savagnin is well known as the grape variety used to produce the oxidative white wines of the Jura. It contains an enzyme which encourages the creation of a 'flor' which is a veil of yeast (*voile*) on the surface of the wine which protects it from excessive oxidation.

The highest expression of this grape is to be found in the famous Vin Jaune wines (yellow wines). By law these have to be matured in small (228 litres) wooden barrels (always old barrels) for a minimum of six years and three months by which time a significant proportion of the wine has disappeared due to evaporation through the porous barrels.

They are not topped up at all. During this time the lactone aroma compound called sotolon ( $C_6H_8O_3$ ) is created in the Vin Jaune providing the characteristic hazelnut and fenugreek or curry aromas that people often associate with this unique drink. It is then bottled in squat clavelins which hold 620 mls. The wine is bottled without fortification but it has many of the same characteristics as a fortified wine.

The leaves of the Savagnin grape are almost circular without the pronounced lobes found on many grape vines.



The leaf of the Savagnin vine (Source Foodtourist)

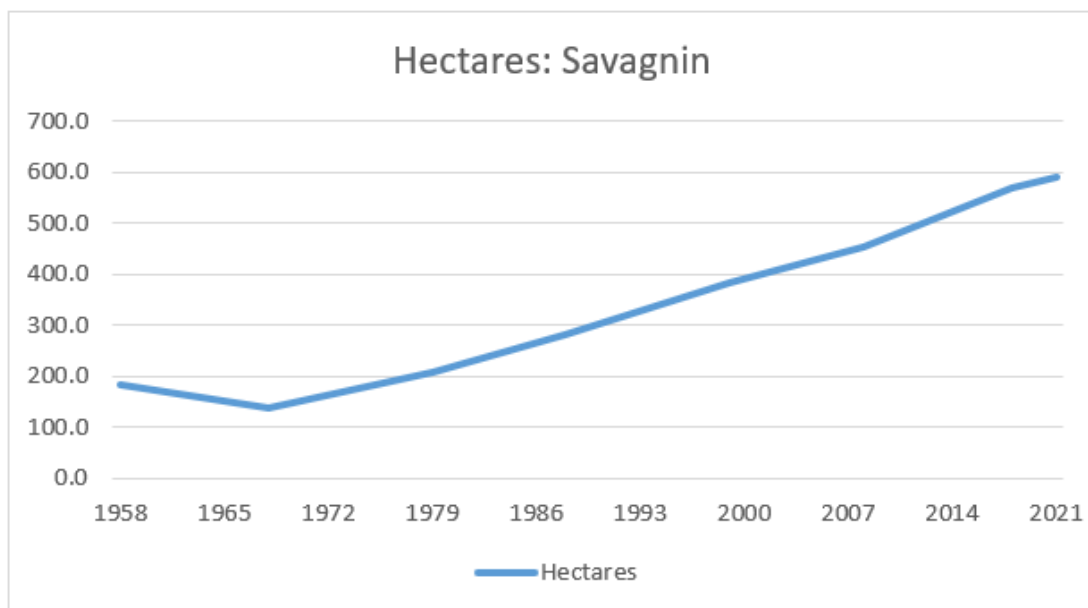
The grapes themselves (see below) form tight bunches and the skins are quite thick helping them to resist disease pressure.



Source [Vitis International Variety Catalogue](#)

We occasionally get Vin Jaune from some of our Jura producers (Bornard, Gahier, Cavarodes for example) and it is always sold by allocation therefore it is a good idea to register your interest with us if you would like to buy a bottle. Hint: If you have read this far we can say that just before Christmas this year we will be receiving a shipment from Tony Bornard with a few bottles of Vin Jaune in if you want to request some!

The graph below shows the rise and rise of Savagnin over the last 50 years or so. This is mainly due to the ever-increasing popularity of Jura wines.



## Wine Appellations – How Vin Jaune fits in

There isn't a simple way to describe the appellations where Vin Jaune can be created, however they are all in the Jura which is the only region where it is permitted.

However, within the Jura region there is one appellation which is dedicated to Vin Jaune alone and two other appellations where Vin Jaune is one of the permitted wine types that can be produced.

The Jura appellations are:

- Arbois
- Arbois-Pupillin
- Chateau-Chalon
- Côtes du Jura
- L'Etoile
- Macvin du Jura
- Crémant du Jura

Let's start with the simplest one which is Chateau-Chalon. Vin Jaune seems to have been a product of the Abbesses of the Abbey of Château-Chalon which was founded before the 10th century CE. This was a prestigious abbey, so their wine was also prestigious!

Now to the rules.

If we look at the "Couleur et type de produit" of the official document for the Chateau-Chalon appellation we see two important rules.

### III. - Couleur et types de produit

L'appellation d'origine contrôlée « Château-Chalon » est réservée aux vins blancs tranquilles dits « vins jaunes ».

A rough translation is that the AOC called Chateau-Chalon is reserved for the still white wines (vins blancs tranquilles) that are called Vins Jaunes. No other wines are permitted. No reds. No rosés. No whites that are not Vin Jaune.

### V. - Encépagement

Les vins sont issus exclusivement du seul cépage savagnin B.

Section V which details the allowed grape varieties is very specific – only the Savagnin grape is allowed – no other.

The vines must be planted at a density no lower than 5000 vines per hectare, unless they are planted in steep areas using terraces.

The date when harvesting starts is set in a document called article D. 645-6 of the rural code.

The grapes must have less than 204 grams of sugar per litre of juice. The juice must also be at least 12% of alcohol.

The yield of grapes must be less than 30 hectolitres per hectare. This ensures that the grapes are of high quality. If too much fertiliser has been added to force the growth, then the yield increases but the quality of the grapes decreases.

The vines must be located in the following communes: Château-Chalon, Domblans, Ménetrulle-Vignoble and Nevy-sur-Seille. No grapes outside these communes can be used in a Vin Jaune labelled with the Château-Chalon appellation.

Probably the strictest rule of all is that once the barrel is filled with grape juice, it must not have any more juice added. A thin white “flor” will form on the surface of the liquid and the long wait will commence.

There is also another clause in the rules which outlines more restrictions as follows:

*Vins susceptibles de bénéficier de la mention « vin jaune » A l'issue de la vinification, les vins font l'objet d'un élevage minimum en fût de chêne, sans ouillage, jusqu'au 15 décembre de la 6ème année qui suit celle de la récolte, dont 60 mois au moins sous voile permettant au vin d'acquérir le « goût de jaune ».*

The translation of this rule is shown below:

*Wines likely to benefit from the “vin jaune” designation.*

*At the end of vinification, the wines undergo a minimum aging in oak barrels, without topping up, until December 15 of the 6th year following that of the harvest, including at least 60 months under veil allowing the wine to acquire the “yellow taste”.*

There is a lot in this rule. Oak barrels must be used. There must be no topping up. The veil that develops on top of the wine to protect it from excessive oxidation must have formed for at least 60 months. The minimum length of time it must spend in the barrel is 5 years and 3 months following the harvest since it is not allowed to be bottled until December 15<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> year following the harvest.

But it is not over yet! The wines cannot be sold until January 1 of the 7th year following that of the harvest!



The label on the left is a good example of one containing Vin Jaune.

Note that this Vin Jaune by local legend Etienne Thiebaud comes from the Côtes du Jura appellation which permits the creation of Vin Jaune in many communes throughout the Jura as well as other types of wine.

In the set of rules for the Côtes du Jura appellation, which are known as the Cahier des Charges (Specifications), Section 5 outlines which types of wine can be made and sold under this appellation by referencing the grape types allowed for each of the wine types which are red, white, rosé, Vin de Paille and Vin Jaune.

The relevant section of the rules is shown below:

#### V. - Encépagement

##### 1°- Encépagement

- a) - Les vins blancs sont issus des cépages suivants :
  - cépages principaux : chardonnay B, savagnin B ;
  - cépages accessoires : pinot noir N, poulsard N (appelé localement ploussard), trousseau N.
- b) - Les vins rouges et rosés sont issus des cépages suivants :
  - cépages principaux : pinot noir N, poulsard N (appelé localement ploussard), trousseau N ;
  - cépages accessoires : chardonnay B, savagnin B.
- c) - Les vins susceptibles de bénéficier de la mention « vin de paille » sont issus des cépages suivants : chardonnay B, poulsard N (appelé localement ploussard), savagnin B, trousseau N.
- d) - Les vins susceptibles de bénéficier de la mention « vin jaune » sont issus du seul cépage savagnin B.

You can see in part d) once again that the sole grape type for Vin Jaune is Savagnin Blanc (Savagnin B).

As with other appellations in the Jura (and only the Jura) that permit the creation of Vin Jaune, the appellation rules stress that Vin Jaune must be bottled in a Clavelin shaped bottle of 620 ml or 62 centilitres.

b)- La bouteille dite « Clavelin » ou « bouteille à vin jaune », d'une contenance de 62 centilitres environ, est réservée au conditionnement des seuls vins de l'appellation d'origine contrôlée bénéficiant de la mention « vin jaune ».

This is covered off in the first line of the rule above. The rest of the rule is reinforcing the fact that the wine must be Vin Jaune if bottled in a Clavelin, and no other type of wine is permitted to be bottled in this size bottle.



Then there is another Jura appellation – the Arbois AOC appellation which permits very similar wines to the Côtes du Jura appellation described above including Vin Jaune. But there is another variation which recognises the quality of wines made in the area which is adjacent to Arbois which is the commune of Pupillin.

It is in this commune that some of the great Jura wines are made by Emmanuel Houillon who carries on the tradition of Maison Pierre Overnoy, Tony Bornard who has taken over from his father Phillip Bornard including some very well-sited (and steep) vineyards around the famous Pupillin sign and also the talented duo of Renaud Bruyère and Adeline Houillon who have some of their beautiful vineyards in this commune.

These vigneronns (and others) live in the tiny village of Pupillin and if a wine is made entirely from grapes picked in their Pupillin vineyards, they can display the appellation as Arbois-Pupillin.

Here is an Arbois-Pupillin Vin Jaune label from Tony Bornard but he also makes Vin Jaune in the Côtes du Jura appellation, from vineyards just a few 100 metres the vines in Arbois-Pupillin.



And finally, a quick note about the l’Etoile appellation which can only be used for wines created from grapes from the communes of L’Etoile, Plaineoiseau, Quintigny and Saint-Didier. The only wine types that are covered by the appellation are white wines in the style of Vin Jaune or Vin de Paille (straw wine where the grapes are dried on straw mats until the sugars are quite concentrated).

## **WARNING**

Under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990* it is an offence:

**for liquor to be delivered to a person under the age of 18 years.**

*Penalty: Fine not exceeding 20 penalty units*

**for a person under the age of 18 years to purchase liquor.**

*Penalty: Fine not exceeding 10 penalty units*

Because of the above penalties we are required by the Tasmanian Government to collect your date of birth from you when ordering via the Internet. We apologise for this imposition. In the past we have been able to accept a declaration that you are over 18.