



RENARDAT-FÂCHE

Bugey, France

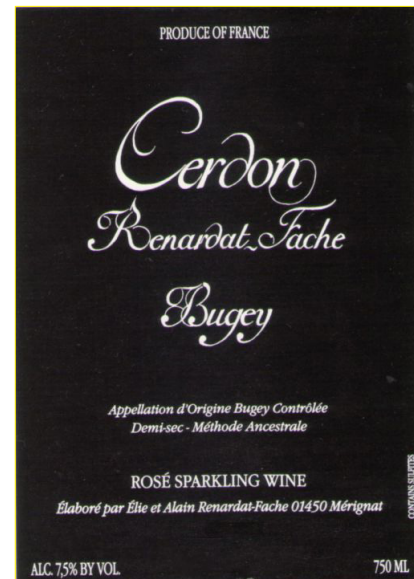
LOUIS/DRESSNER SELECTIONS The Bugey, halfway between Lyons and Geneva, is one of the tiniest and most obscure wine areas in France. Although the altitude is modest, the terrain is very mountainous, the roads are steep and winding as in the Alps and the villages are built for cold winters – the houses made of gray/white limestones all bunched together on narrow streets.

The vineyards are hard to detect, little patches here and there on steep slopes looking southeast or southwest, lost in the midst of fields with grazing cows and dense forests. The total surface of vineyards in the Bugey covers about 170 hectares and the varieties are borrowed from all the surrounding areas: Gamay, Poulsard (a grape from Northern Jura), Roussette, Mondeuse (both from Savoie) and Chardonnay. Many still wines are produced, but the region's star wine is the Cerdon Méthode Ancestrale, a demi-sec, pink bubbly made by spontaneous but incomplete fermentation.

Alain Renardat is a respected vigneron in Cerdon, and was a long-time supplier of Alain Chapel's restaurant in the Dombes. The Dombes, which, like the Bugey, is in the Ain department, is an area of ponds and marshes, known for its fish and small birds. Alain Chapel, who died several years ago, was a chef beloved among chefs, and famous for his love of wine and winemakers. A vigneron selected by Chapel was guaranteed to have great personality and wines. And while the restaurant is now closed after a long run under the helm of Chapel's widow and sons, the winemakers he'd bring together annually to treat them to dinner remain great friends.

Alain, though technically retired for years, is active as ever. Along with his son Elie, they make their Cerdon from Gamay and Poulsard, and follow the technique of méthode ancestrale (as opposed to Méthode Champenoise plain old carbonation, the preferred method used for supermarket wines). The grapes are picked by hand, pressed and fermented in cold vats until the alcohol reaches about six degrees of alcohol. After a light filtration that leaves most of the active yeast in the unfinished wine, it is bottled and continues its fermentation in the bottle, reaching about 7.5 or 8 degrees of alcohol and retaining a fair quantity of its original sugar. It is more vinous (with grapey primary aromas) than most Champagne, since there is neither dosage nor addition of yeast before the second fermentation.

Renardat's Cerdon is delicate, berry-scented, refreshing, and makes a delicious aperitif or dessert wine (even chocolate goes well with it).



Cerdon du Bugey 2023 12/750ml

79% Gamay/21% Poulsard. The Renardats are 7th-generation vignerons in the tiny Cerdon du Bugey village of Mérignat. They farm their 13 hectares of Gamay and Poulsard organically and biodynamically (certified as of the 2022 vintage) in these high, rolling, wooded, steep hills of rocky clay-limestone soils. The fruit is harvested by hand, gently pressed and naturally fermented at very cold temperatures in steel tanks. At around 6% alcohol, the wine is bottled and slowly continues its fermentation in the cold cellar. Each bottle is then emptied by vacuum into a pressurized tank; the wine in tank is filtered to remove most of the remaining yeasts and rebottled with a touch of sulfur. The bottles are stored standing up, ferment a touch longer, to around 7.5-8% alcohol, and are then disgorged, usually in December of the vintage. The process seems complex for a "simple" wine but is the only way to discourage refermentation and exploding bottles with méthode ancestrale wine with residual sugar; back in the olden days, gargantuan quantities of sulfur were the only way to try to suppress further fermentation, often not successfully, and the wine rarely got sent further than 20 km. away from the village.

Technical Specifications

Product Type: Sparkling Wine

Variety: Gamay/Poulsard

Farming Type: Biodynamic