

# Spotlight on Florent Rouve

*The trailblazing winemaker and co-owner of Vins Rijckaert talks about wine life in Burgundy and Jura.*

BY LAUREN BUZZEO

0



*Florent Rouve*

0

Some people are born into the wine industry. Others work tirelessly to carve their own path. Florent Rouve is a perfect example of the latter.

After he worked alongside founder Jean Rijckaert, a Burgundian wine legend who founded Maison Verget before he established his eponymous brand, Rouve took over management of the Vins Rijckaert estate and all winemaking in 2013.

The brand maintains cellars in both Burgundy (the Mâcon) and the Jura, and also produces wines from the regions. Vins Rijckaert has reached new heights under Rouve's watchful eye. He's preserved the savoir-faire and minimal-intervention approach that cemented its brand's reputation—restricted yields, hand harvesting, slow and moderate pressings, indigenous yeasts and long oak aging without stirring or disruption.

His goal: To express each grape's unique character and individual terroir in the truest and most natural way.

We talked with Rouve about his wild beginnings, his vinous children and what it's like to make wine in two of France's hottest regions.



---

### *Leaders in Biodynamic Winemaking Reveal Successes*

---

#### **How did you get started in the wine business?**

I was not born in the “wine world.” I was born in Montpellier, and after moving around quite often with my parents, I finally arrived in the Jura in 1991, when I was 16 years old. Having a geologist father always telling me his stories when he was prospecting in wild areas, I always wanted to work with nature. So after arriving in the Jura, which has plenty of gorgeous forests, I started studies to work in forest management. During my vacations, I worked in the vineyards to earn money. Those were my first experiences in the vineyard.

#### **What is your favorite thing about your job?**

From a technical point of view, when I make the blend of the barrels and just after racking them. When the cuvée is homogenized, it is a critical moment, a completion, the final expression of what I will offer to people. But more generally, what I find so interesting about my job is that it gives me the opportunity to meet lots of people. Wine is not just a consumption [product, it's] part of the culture, a link between people.

#### **How would you characterize or personify the multiple appellations you make wine from in Burgundy?**

Pouilly-Fuissé is like a big brother, powerful and proud, but on the other hand, sensitive and thoughtful. Saint-Véran is your best friend: Warm, intense, living, someone you can travel with. His contact is comforting, and you love to spend time with him. For Viré-Clessé, it is the finesse,

elegance and shy complexity that actually speaks volumes. It's like a little sister with her secret garden, from whom you can take a great wealth if you take the trouble to listen to her. The Mâcons are a diverse band with the same course of action. Some of them are round, some are nervous, some are shy, some are intellectual and others more physical, but they are all very generous and lively. The Mâcons are a bus of rugby teammates, among them [are] some that you will have as friends for life. Finally, the wines from Côte d'Or are like an old uncle, with whom you love to spend time by the fireside where he yields secrets. Impressive and complex, but benevolent, it is something you never forget.

### **How does winemaking in the Jura differ from Burgundy?**

The “traditional” way of making white wines in the Jura, mostly with Savagnin, is to leave the space from evaporation that occurs in the aging barrels, without filling them up [or topping off]. So there is oxidation, and the wines have a very specific taste, like hazelnut, curry or green apple. The most well-known of these wines is the Vin Jaune. Personally, I do not do wines like that in the Jura. I make my Jura wine like I make the ones from Burgundy. My goal is to highlight first the natural qualities of the grapes, and the typicities of the vineyards or terroirs, so I avoid anything that could change the structure and the characteristics of the grapes. That way, when you drink one of my Chardonnays from the Jura and another from Bourgogne, you can really feel the differences of the terroirs, and just the differences of the terroirs.

### **What are your three favorite wines to make from your portfolio, and why?**

Difficult to say... they are all my children. But if I had to choose, it would be the Viré-Clessé Les Vercherres, which expresses the fine complexity of Chardonnay from a great appellation that's still relatively under the radar; the Arbois En Paradis Chardonnay, which is made from a cold location—a cold location for the Jura—and is for people who really enjoy crisp, pure, mineral and ripely acidic Chardonnay; and the Les Sarres Savagnin from Côtes du Jura, which is sourced from a great east-facing location [with] generous sun, where the soil is very typical of the Jura: a grey marl with a lot of fossilized oyster shells, called “les gryphées” in French. Les Sarres Savagnin is vinified without oxidation, and expresses the range of varietal aromas with big energy on the finish.



### ***About the Author***

**LAUREN BUZZEO**

**@laurbuzz**

***Managing Editor, Print, and Tasting Director***

Reviews wines from South Africa and Languedoc-Roussillon. Reviews beers.

Buzzeo joined *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* in 2006 as a tasting coordinator, and eventually became Tasting Director and Senior Editor, responsible for overseeing all aspects of the tasting and review program. Most recently, Buzzeo assumed the role of Managing Editor. Since coming to *Wine Enthusiast*, she has made it one of her personal missions to promote the acceptance of cross-drinking, encouraging everyone to embrace finely crafted libations across all beverage categories. Buzzeo is also an avid homebrewer and a member of the AHA (American Homebrewers Association). **Email: [lbuzzeo@wineenthusiast.net](mailto:lbuzzeo@wineenthusiast.net).**

### FROM THE WEB



The Simple Trick That Makes Chicken Breasts So Much Better



Cauliflower Melts Are Your New Favorite

Powered by ZergNet