

GÉRARD BOULAY

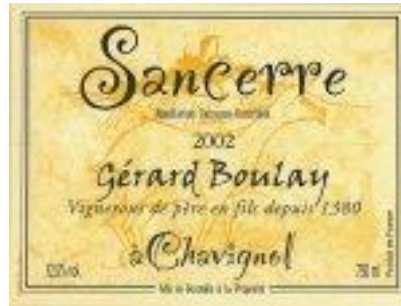
Chavignol

The Kimmeridgean chalk slopes of Chavignol are home to the most profound Sauvignon Blanc wines yet crafted on our planet – albeit that this grape only arrived in town around the turn of the last century. In the hands of the Cotats or of Edmund Vatan, mature vines and three generation-old traditions offer a profound and long-lived gustatory experience.

“But who else,” has long been my questioning refrain, “can stand comparison with these giants?” Well, as it turns out, a friendly and modest vigneron right on Chavignol’s one main street, that’s who. The first time I stepped off that street and into Gérard Boulay’s modest tasting room, I soon found myself being offered a decade’s worth of Sancerre with a richness and complexity to match the best.

Now, I know you can get a good argument going about Sancerre “typicity”. Just ask Francois Cotat, whose wines the authorities have on a couple of occasions denied the A.O.C. for lack thereof. Are exotic spices, nut oils, tropical fruits and red berries “typical” of Sauvignon, much less Chavignol? Alas, no. Typical are still the manifestations of borderline ripeness: gooseberry, passion fruit, grass clippings, and – dare one say it? – cat pee. You can have that “typicity” thank you – don’t bother to leave its mark in my glass ... or even on the nearest tree!

Boulay is something of a nature boy, priding himself on his organic viticultural and relatively passive vinificatory methods. There are alas fewer than two acres of Clos de Beaujeu to inform his profound eponymous bottling. Beginning



with vintage 2004, Boulay will vinify a parcel given him by a friend of a bit over an acre in the steep Mont Damnés- arguable Chavignol’s top terroir.

Varieties: *Sauvignon*

Total acreage: 22 acres

Average production: 2,500 cs.

Vinification: “Basic” Sancerre in Tank; “Beaujeu” in cask. No yeasting, low sulfur. The “Beaujeu” is bottled unfiltered.

Sancerre

Sancerre “Clos de Beaujeu”