

A History Lesson

Written by Terry Connor

Tuesday, 01 November 2016 15:00

I started my Christmas shopping the other day when I purchased enough champagne for Christmas Eve and Christmas dinner. My wife and I will have the whole family for the Holidays and I must say that I am looking forward to it. It promises to be organized chaos with six or seven conversations going on at the same time. The conversations will allow everyone to work up a good thirst and Voila! There goes the Champagne. No regrets! I did not buy it to look at. I bought it to enhance the Holiday Spirit.

When I arrived home from shopping, I removed one of the bottles from the box. Had a feeling in the back of my mind that this wine came from an old established winery that probably went back several hundred years. I decided to Google Philippe Prie, and sure enough I was correct. The winery dates back to 1737. From that date, MAISON PHILIP PRIE has been producing extraordinary wine in a region of Champagne called Cote Des Bar. The Maison owns 57 acres of prime real estate and the latest vines were planted some 30 years ago.

Philippe Prie is one of the oldest producers in the Cote Des Bar Region, with ownership and winemaking skills passed from generation to generation of the *same* Family. The latest generation, represented by Fabienne Prie, took over the reins of the winery in the 1990s, elevating the wines to an unprecedented level of quality, adding a feminine influence recognized by the press to great acclaim.

Robert's Son, Andre Farjon, has been the man behind the estate for the last thirty years. Nowadays it is Andre's son Benjamin Farjon, who has started to take over the reins of the business, enthusiastically pushing forward his father's and grandfather's vision of their extraordinary terroir.

Some notes on the Vineyard are important to set forth as a frame of reference on just where the winery is located. The Cotes Des Bar appellation marks the transition between the plains of Champagne to the North and the rolling slopes of Burgundy to the South in the department of the Aube, lying just north of the town of Chablis. As such, the soil in the Cotes Des Bar more closely resembles that of Chablis – Kimmeridgian marl topped by Portlandia limestone— than that of the vineyards near Epernay and Reims, which is composed of mostly Cretaceous chalk; and this is what makes the wines of Fabienne Prie so special in the world of Champagne.

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Fabienne Prie has set forth her Philosophy on the wines from her region. Her goal is to fully respect the diversified terroirs and complicated micro climates that make up The Cotes Des Bar appellation. "As such I will try to achieve the ultimate balance of delicacy and elegance, as well as bring a more feminine influence to the wines." (Allow me to interject a few comments of my own. I am in complete agreement with Ms. Fabienne Prie. She talks about her wine with pride and authority. She reflects the way most Family Owners of Wineries from the European Countries, whose ownership goes back many, many generations, talk about their wines, their properties and their products. It is through this expression of passion that they sustain their positions. They are not trying to say that their winery is better than another person's winery. What they are saying is that they have a respect for the winery and that they will always put forth their best effort.)

In a very seamless manner, the pride of the winery owner passes on to the company that he or she selects as the one that will be allowed to represent them and to distribute the wines. In regard to the wine that we are dealing with today, it is the Company known as Serge Dore Selections. Mr. Dore acknowledges that his mission as an importer is simple: to seek out and present a selection of the finest wines. These "signature " wines are chosen for the elements that make them authentic – the land, the soils, and the climate combine to form the terroir, which is the specificity of a place. The people – i.e. the human element – at its best brings forth in the wine a sense of place, the expression of a terroir, making it a wine from *some where* and from *someone*, a time signature of a land and its people.

Serge Dore has followed through on his promise. His wines have been featured in the best of wine journals and are frequently found among the favorites of influential restaurateurs and oenophiles across the United States.

WINESPEAK

Our wine of today tastes like a vintage Champagne, minus the price. It is lush and developed, tasting of toasted brioche and unsweetened lemon curd. It goes with caviar, hors d' oeuvres, anything fried. (Also try it with a Twinkie.) I would like to thank the folks at Serge Dore Selections for allowing me to use some of the copy found in their brochures.

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