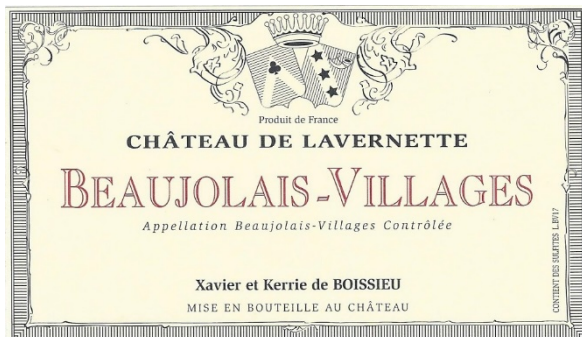


Château de Lavernette

Leynes



If the Loire is pastoral, Alsace majestic, and Languedoc rugged, then the Mâconnais and Haut Beaujolais are enchanting. This is Hobbit Land, full of hills and dales and little stone villages, and a skyline dominated by the twin cliffs of Vergisson and Solutr .

The commune of Leynes and its old four-story Ch teau de Lavernette are right at the crossroads of Beaujolais and the M connais. Down across the road from the ch teau, to the east, grows a Chardonnay vine- yard in limestone soil for

its cr mant and Beaujolais Blanc. Up on the broad slope just southwest of the ch teau grows Gamay in granite soil for its two red Beaujolais, plus two small parcels of Chardonnay in more limey soils that are reserved for its Bourgogne Blanc. Across a tiny creek to the north of the ch teau is the southern boundary of the Pouilly-Fuiss  appellation. A hill goes steeply up from that creek to the village of Chaintr , and on this flank the ch teau farms four small parcels in limestone to make two Pouilly-Fuiss  cuvees. A third cuv e of Pouilly-Fuiss  is made from a parcel that grows near the top of the long hill west of the ch teau. Not far from this parcel the hill summits and then falls northward into the deep bowl where the village of Fuiss  sits. The geography here is nothing if not compact.

The ch teau has been passed down through the Lavernette family since 1596, when Philibert Bernard de Lavernette bought the property from the monks of Tournus. It was a *Seigneurie*, or lordship, and as such a seat of power that administered justice in the area. (Those decisions, along with tax records, land deeds and the like, are recorded in ledgers in the Lavernette library, and have been studied by historians.) Documents from 1684 inventory two wine presses and four large vats on the property, but no doubt vineyards and wine making were part of Lavernette's makeup long before this. Early in the twentieth century, Ren  de Boissieu married Gabri lle Bernard de Lavernette, the heiress of Lavernette, and the property passed to the de Boissieu family. The twin shields on the Lavernette labels represent the families' coats of arms.

Ren  was the grandfather of Bertrand de Boissieu, who, with his Dutch wife Anke, had been the director of Lavernette. Bertrand and Anke were the first in the Beaujolais region to farm according to the ecological principles of *lutte raisonn e*, or reasoned fight, a pragmatic approach to organic farming that was, in their younger days, a radical thing in France. Beginning in 2006, their son Xavier, with his American wife Kerrie, took this one step further by converting the ch teau's 28 acres of vineyards to biodynamic farming. Certification came in 2010.

Xavier had never been comfortable farming with modern chemical inputs, and in 2005 he and Bertrand embarked on an experiment that continues to this day. They segregated 20 rows of Chardonnay of the same clone (CL277) and rootstock (SO4) all planted in 1988 in the Beaujolais Blanc vineyard. Ten rows were treated entirely organically and the other ten were treated biodynamically. Early on, the results showed little differentiation, but by the third harvest when the grapes were blind-tasted among the harvesters, most preferred the biodynamically-farmed grapes. These days, when they do the test with their harvesters, it's nine out of ten people who prefer the BD grapes and their balance between sugar and acid. It's far from a scientific test, but then again with wine subjective impressions can be everything.

www.lavernette.com