

# A GLASS APART

Laurent Faure, owner of Le Vieux Comptoir, on chignin bergeron: a little-known Alpine white wine

Interview: Viel Richardson

Chignin bergeron is a really interesting white wine produced in the Vin de Savoie appellation of the French Alps. Although the name chignin bergeron is unique to this region, the grape is the same variety as the much better known roussanne, which is used in the Côtes du Rhône in the production of several prestigious wines, including châteauneuf-du-pape.

The wonderful thing about chignin bergeron is that the flavours and the aromas have the same big character of a Rhône Valley roussanne, but without the price. Roussanne wines can be quite expensive, but in the Alps, it is still possible to access chignin bergeron for more reasonable prices.

Classically, the chignin

bergeron has bright, floral aromas; you also find nuts, stone fruits like peach or apricot, and a hint of spice. It has very rich flavours, but because of the terroir of the appellation there is also minerality and good acidity. Sometimes, people find the roussanne wines of the Côtes du Rhône a bit too rich. With chignin bergeron, the extra acidity gives a nice silky texture and a better balance.

Using chignin bergeron grapes, local winemakers produce very classic white wines that can be drunk for themselves, paired with the main meal, or even used as an aperitif. They also produce some specific cuvées with grapes that are a little more flavoured. While not technically what is called

'late harvest' wines, where the grapes are left on the vines for longer to develop more flavour, the harvest for these cuvées is slightly delayed by about two weeks, giving the grapes more fruitiness and allowing the flavours to develop slightly further. Because of the extra richness, these cuvées are able to match with foods with big flavours.

Chignin bergeron is only produced by very traditional winemakers and as in many parts of France, production is very strictly regulated and protected. One very important thing to note is that you will only ever find 100 per cent chignin bergeron wines. There

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is no blending at all. In the Rhône Valley, roussanne is usually blended with other white grapes from the area. If you really want to taste the essence of this grape, buy a chignin bergeron.

I sometimes get asked if chignin bergeron is found anywhere else in the Alps, and the answer is no. In fact, only a small part of the Savoie appellation is able to produce it. The winemaker we represent probably has the best parcels for this wine in the region. If you have not tried chignin bergeron before, you have a very pleasant experience in store.

LE VIEUX COMPTOIR

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