

An Integrity Wines Selection

Eddy Oosterlinck - Domaine de Juchepie Coteaux du Layon

A man's passionate Joie De Vivre: In 1985 Eddy Oosterlinck, Belgian by birth, and his wife Mileine moved to **Coteaux du Layon** and followed his passion of making natural Chenin Blanc. Seven hectares of **50+ yr. old Chenin Blanc vines (with the oldest planted in 1911) on top soils of clay and slate with slate subsoil create wines of intense minerality and complexity.** The proximity to local rivers, augmented by the occurrence of morning mist or rain stimulates the development of botrytis at Juchepie. Vintages rich in botrytis allow Eddy to make his beloved sweet cuvees. When there is less noble rot in the vineyard then sweet wine production continues, just with more passes through the vineyard, and the production of the dry whites naturally increases. **The balance of dry to sweet wine produced here is thus determined by nature.**



Juchepie is certified organic by ecocert and uses full biodynamic methods, certified by Biodyvin. Yields are controlled by pruning down the number of buds (6-10 per plant, depending on its age) rather than green-harvesting. The vines are nearly all Chenin Blanc with a small bit of Cabernet Franc. The fruit is harvested in 4-8 passes, pressed early in the evening, starting very gently, giving just enough force to burst a few berries and allow the juice to trickle down through the pressed fruit. As the trickle of juice slows to a drip he turns up the pressure to encourage a greater flow, and in a process that takes perhaps 24 hours he gently teases about 85% of the juice from the grapes.

Once extracted the juice from each individual pressing is reunified the juice then goes into barrels, new for the best sweet wines, older for the other cuvées, and thereafter there is **minimal intervention**. The cellar is humidified with a sprinkler hosepipe buried in the gravel, a necessary intervention as the impermeable concrete floor kept the air in the cellar very dry; Eddy turns this on whenever he enters, sometimes allowing it to run for half the day in times of warmth and drought, when the ambient humidity is very low. It also has the effect of modulating the temperature, says Eddy, which never rises above 18°C. Otherwise there are no additions to the wine, no yeasts, no enzymes and certainly no sugar, just a little sulphur before the wines go into bottle, and minimal racking along the way.



The Wines of Domaine de Juchepie

Starting with the **dry wines, there are two cuvées, Les Monts and Le Clos**, made from selected botrytis-free fruit, both of which see twelve months *en barrique*, using 1-2 year old wood, before bottling. In the 2007 vintage, these wines are vibrant and fresh, with floral elements. There are a number of botrytis affected cuvées, ranging from the lighter **Les Churelles** through the richer **Les Quarts** to the heady, sugar-rich **La Passion**, all excellent wines but themselves only tasters of what can be found in the Oosterlinck masterpiece, the **Cuvée Quintessence**.

All botrytis cuvées see 18 months in oak before bottling, typically using a mix of new and older barrels (one-third new for Les Churelles and Les Quarts, half new for La Passion) although La Quintessence is 100% new oak.

Eddy believes in the importance of bitterness in wine for it to be 'noble', the wine possessing elements of savouriness to counterbalance the sugar. Bitterness is, in his opinion, required alongside the usual sweetness and acidity, making for a more 'digestible' drink and a more complex sensation on the palate. **His beliefs reflect a**

passion for his product, a belief in its style, its authenticity and its quality. This passion certainly comes through in the finished product. They are richly coloured with an impressive array of hues (Eddy has a habit of decanting his wines for tastings, which shows them off wonderfully) ranging from elegant and shimmering gold to a more burnished tone. The aromas are enthralling and evocatively complex. And as you might expect, **the wines are handsomely structured in the mouth, svelte but linear, an intertwining of sweet botrytis character and a savory, mouth-watering grip.**

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