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KATHARINA WOITCZYK

Editor in Chief TASTED magazine

Katharina Woitczyk was born in Langen, near Frankfurt, Germany in 1978. She obtained her Bachelor Degree in Foreign Languages and Literature (French, English, Italian, Spanish) at Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt in 2000.

During the German chapter of her life, Katharina worked for 5 years as a freelance journalist for Darmstädter Echo, a local newspaper of her region, and realized several projects in communications and event management. At the end of 2000, the international chapters of her life began with a 9 month trip to Florence where she improved her Italian.

In 2001, Katharina moved to Bordeaux, where she obtained her French Diplôme (Maîtrise) in Foreign Languages (Italian and English). Thereafter, she continued her studies to obtain a Masters in Journalism at the Sorbonne in Paris. Having worked in several restaurants in Bordeaux, to finance her university classes and travels, Katharina fell in love with wine, gastronomy, and of course - Bordeaux.

She is passionate about good food, travelling and wine, and loves to share her experiences with her readers. Katharina is the Editor in Chief of

CHATEAU FONTBONNE



WINE MADE WITH LOVE FOR TERROIR

Château Fontbonne is nestled on one of the beautiful and picturesque slopes on the Right Bank close to the village of Sauveterre. Today it is managed by the 3rd generation of winemakers in the family, Philippe Renier. Philippe, who originally followed the tradition of his father's side of the family and worked as a butcher and later in the meat and cattle trade, took over the property in 1993, thus exploring the tradition of winemaking on his mother's side.

Yet he has not completely given up on cattle and still has a ranch with a herd of Limousine cows some 15 kilometres away from Château Fontbonne.

When he arrived in 1993 there was no more wine produced at the property, all the grapes were sold directly to the "négocié", and the winemaking facilities were completely obsolete and rundown. The first thing he did was to demolish everything and built new winemaking cellars. This took him one year and, in 1994, he harvested his first grapes which he vinified himself and bottled in 1995. During the following five years he constantly improved the buildings and increased their surface. A storage area and the offices were added. Mr Renier remembers that from his early childhood enjoying good food has always been a family tradition. At age 18 he left home and started working for a big meat and cattle trading company, "it was hard work," he says, "but very rewarding, too."

Philippe Renier also feels deeply rooted near the Basque coast. He loves rugby, the traditions, good food, good wine and the lifestyle and philosophy that go with it. He is pursuing his heritage of hedonistic food and wine culture, of honesty and friendship and within this framework he conceives his terroir driven wines.

Today Philippe Renier produces two red cuvées; Château Fontbonne Cuvée Classique and Château Fontbonne Cuvée Marie, his premium wine. Besides these he produces one dry Sauvignon Blanc and a Rosé, which is produced by bleeding, hence a so called "Rosé de Saignée".

His vines grow on two distinct soil types, calcareous clay and calcareous lime stone, which result in various, and quite different plots and lots of wines. His two red wines are composed of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. He has recently pulled out all his Cabernet Franc, which did not satisfy him in terms of consistency of quality. This year he was also obliged, he emphasises, to pull out one of his, "best plots of old Merlot vines" due to a change in legislation concerning planting densities. Unfortunately, the said plot no longer corresponded to the legal criteria.

He believes that his wines truly reflect the expression of his soils, which he describes as genuinely expressive. He is of the opinion that his red wines are very aromatic and relatively tannic with good expression, ample tannic structure and great balance between acidity and alcohol. He also feels that they age very well.

He has stopped using herbicides and has turned to working the soils instead, he says that this has been made possible thanks to today's machines, which he feels are much more efficient and easy to handle and thus working the soils is actually no longer a constraint in terms of time and labour costs. Evidently this is a positive decision for the environment and the quality of his property's soils. He has also embraced reasoned, minimum intervention farming methods and leaves one row covered with grass whilst he labours the next. He states his

He only starts his fermentations once the juices are completely clear and limpid, which usually is the case after about two days of temperature controlled pre-fermentation settling. His white and rosé wines are a true niche product with only 12.000 bottles per category produced. His main clients are hotels, restaurants and wine cellars in France, and needless to say, his wines are extremely popular on the Basque coast, the country of rugby and great aperitifs. He does not believe in electronics, for him the only way to truly appreciate the state of one's wine is by tasting it every day.

The premium wine of Château Fontbonne is a cuvee called Marie, after Philippe Renier's daughter Marie, aged 18, won the French Horseball Champion in 2010. Cuvée Marie is aged in 100% oak barrels of one to three years and what matters to Philippe Renier is more the natural micro oxygenation effect transmitted to his wine than the aromatic components of the wood. This is why, in general, he deliberately chose not to use new oak.

He feels that the use of oak barrels has a very positive effect on the tannins and structure of the wine.

For the Cuvée Marie he uses exclusively old vines from his very best plots. Cuvée Marie is only produced in the best vintages: 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2010 were "Marie years". On the other hand, no Cuvée Marie was made in 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2007.

According to the oenoleptic features of each lot of Cuvée Marie the barrels are individually selected to perfectly match the wine and this is determined by Renier and Chamade during numerous tasting sessions. What counts is the power of the wine, but only in the sense that the wine needs to be able to stand barrel ageing.

Renier truly believes that the terroir plays a very important role. Living the terroir, and understanding it is according to him a very important quality for a good winemaker. He also feels that blending and moreover, choosing the right blend is a chief concern in Bordeaux winemaking. The only way to determine the right blend; rigorous and constant tasting is paramount. He also feels that a relationship of trust between the consulting oenologist and the winemaker is very important, the oenologist and the winemaker according to him really have to form a team in which both parties have confidence in the other one.

Philippe Renier believes that the only option for winegrowers in Bordeaux is to produce quality products and this conviction shines through his wines.

• 2010 CHATEAU FONTBONNE Cuvée Classique, Bordeaux (noix vat)

Very dark red colour violet rim. Lovely nose of blueberries and blackberries, some hints of tar and leather. Pretty strong attack, but great balance between alcohol and acidity, good freshness, still young tannins, good grip, medium length and persistence.

• 2009 CHATEAU FONTBONNE Cuvée Classique, Bordeaux (noix vat)

Slightly brownish tinge, surprisingly cloudy. Less straight forward on the nose than 2010, more on the leathery forest floor side. However good grip on the palate, nice structure, some flavours of blueberries, pretty good balance of alcohol, tannins, acidity.

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appreciation for the "very methodical way of working the vines when actively using reasoned, minimum intervention techniques."

The vineyards of Château Fontbonne stretch over 19 hectares around the property. He owns another 15 hectares of vineyards next to his cattle ranch which is situated close to the villages of Rach, Blasimon and Mérignas. There he cultivates his dry white Bordeaux, the Sauvignon Blanc.

In his view fruit is a very important, if not the paramount feature of his wine, which is why he believes that the right vinification method to preserve the fruit is totally vital. Thus he has turned towards thermoregulation and, together with his oenologist Christine Chaminaud, painstakingly controls and observes the temperatures of his wines during the fermentation process.

This is particularly true for his white and rosés wines, his red wines on the other hand are made to be kept in bottle for a few years and this is the reason why the right acidity and the right consistency of the tannins matter so much to him. For the white and rosé wines he feels that mastering the addition of sulphur is also important. If there is one thing he cannot stand, "it is whites and rosés which give him a headache", he exclaims. Therefore he is convinced of the extreme importance of acidity and freshness. For his white and rosé wines he stresses the significance of the settling of the juices.

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• 2009 CHÂTEAU FONTBONNE  
Cuvée Marie, Bordeaux  
(several lots of barrel samples - lot 1)

Very nice brilliant limpid red violet. Seducing nose of blackcurrant and blueberries, some very delicate hints of coffee. Nice grip on the palate, soft and suave tannins, touch of minerality, really nice finish marked by beautiful liquorice note, pretty long. Quite complex and multi-layered.

• 2009 CHÂTEAU FONTBONNE  
Cuvée Marie, Bordeaux (lot 2)

Deeper violet colour. Aromatically more on the leathery forest floor side, some hints of blackberry and toasted bread. Surprisingly nice forward fruit on the palate though, good acidity, well balanced and structured, more linear.

• 2009 CHÂTEAU FONTBONNE  
Cuvée Marie, Bordeaux (lot 3)

Dark violet light rim. Fresh nose, yet less expressive than the two former samples, but fresh and clean. Nice balance between acidity and alcohol, lighter structure, more discreet than the two former barrels samples.

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