

Daniel-Étienne Defaix

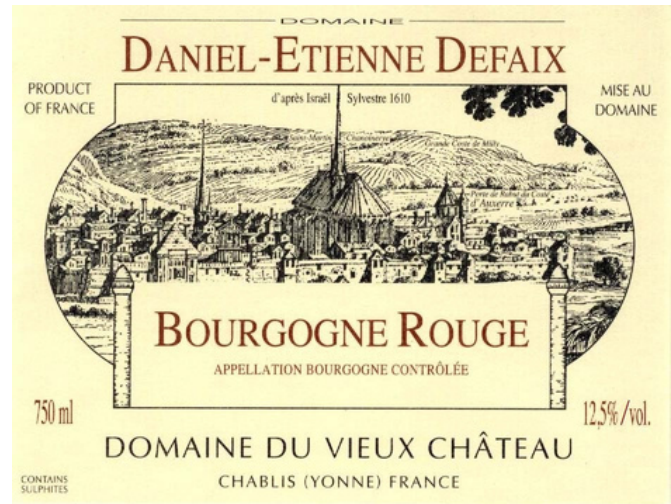
Bourgogne Rouge

We are fortunate to work with the exuberant Daniel-Etienne Defaix, whose family has been plying their trade in and around Chablis since the 17th century. In generations past, long aging in Chablis was more the rule than the exception, but today Defaix is virtually alone in that practice. The Defaix family-one of the oldest wine growing families in the region-owns thirty hectares of vines, the vast majority of which are in premier and grand cru vineyards, but Daniel designates only his best lots each vintage as cru-level, declassifying the remainder as villages. Astonishingly, he bottles these cru-level wines only after eight to ten years of aging in tanks, therein undergoing a slow natural settling which prevents the need for filtration.

Long aging is not the only way in which Defaix distinguishes himself. He relies exclusively on naturally occurring yeasts-a rare practice in Chablis-and his fermentations routinely last between three and six weeks (inoculating gets it done in four-to-six days), with malolactic fermentation sometimes requiring two years to finish in his frigid cellar. He favors extraordinarily long lees contact, but employs stirring only for the first two years, and then only seldom; this extended period of yeast autolysis guards a wine's color and promotes a generosity of texture, according to Defaix. Furthermore, it takes a significant amount of time for the lees to settle, and Defaix relies on patience rather than fining or filtration-two practices which are par for the course in the region.

Wine

On the plain above Chablis' swath of grand crus, Defaix owns less than a hectare of old Pinot Noir, and from it he produces a rare example of a red wine from this zone. Aged in tank with natural settling of lees like his Chablis, it offers bright, tangy fruits and a salty streak that speaks of its Kimmeridgian origins.



Vineyards

Country: France

Region: Chablis

Appellation: AOC Bourgogne

Soil: Kimmeridgian limestone-clay marls

Farming Practices: Lutte raisonnée

Winemaking

Fermentation: Following total destemming, wine ferments spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks for 3-4 weeks.

Varieties: 100% Pinot Noir

Aging: 12 months sur lies; 1 year in stainless steel-tanks.