



*Area* : 3 ha

*Average Age of the Vines* : 35 years old

*Average Annual Production* : 7 000 btles

*Grape Variety* : Pinot Noir

## Localisation

Michel continues with his special vine parcel selection in the Hautes-Côtes. After the launch in 2014 of his single-owner Fontaine Saint Martin *monopole*, with the 2016 vintage it is the turn of the vines situated “Au Vallon”.

This parcel of 3 hectares is to be found in the *commune* area of Marey les Fussey village, on a hillside slope facing due south, on the edge of a forest and at an elevation from 425 to 440 m. The upper parcel is on Oxfordian marls, the middle and lower parts on clayey limestones from the same period.

Michel began in 1978 to clear and replant in Pinot Noir this named *lieu-dit* area, abandoned since the phylloxera crisis. This replanting was finished in 2013, after long negotiations before acquiring the last parcel, belonging to the church in the village. The average age of replanted vines is today at thirty years or so.

The different Hautes-Côtes parcels have always been vinified and aged separately, with blending only taking place two months before bottling. Michel therefore knows very well the particularities of each of them.

The “Vallon” has always been characterised by wines with silkier tannins and less noticeable acidity than the other *cuvées*. It is therefore the one that is easiest to taste when young. This sun-based *solaire* typicality is no doubt due to the maximum sunlight from which the south-facing slopes benefit, combined with the shelter from northerly and easterly winds afforded by the surrounding hillside and forest.

## Vinification and Ageing

Traditional vinification. During the first 6 months, these wines are kept in large oak barrels in a very old cellar located underneath Jean GROS's house.

During the following 12 months, maturing continues in traditional barrels of 1 to 3 wines. Those barrels, which have stored higher ranked wines, give a little of the aromas of the previous wines. This technique improves the complexity of those *cuvées*.



## Vintage 2017

A vintage noted for the early return of springtime warmth, followed by a hot and sunny summer that was to extend well beyond harvest time.

Winemakers trembled with fear on 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April. Temperatures forecast to be below 0°C in the early morning led to fears of reliving the frost havoc of the previous year. The mobilisation of the whole *Côte* to light straw bale fires allowed damage to be avoided.

The exceptionally lovely month of June engendered perfect vine flowering and rapid swelling of grape bunches, promising a generous crop. July and August were also very favourable. Some light rainfall at end August was most welcome in countering the very dry period and accelerating ripening. Despite short pruning in springtime, the domain carried out green harvesting during the summer, so as to limit production, particularly in the vine parcels frost damaged in 2016.

We began harvesting on 9<sup>th</sup> September on the *Côte*. Ten days later, the whole crop had been brought in as ripeness was progressing quickly. The wines reflect this very well-achieved ripeness, with silky tannins and moderate acidity levels that occasionally needed lifting during vinification. The excellent healthiness of grapes made sorting almost meaningless and translated into vibrant, deep colours, as well as great purity of aromas.

In summary, this is a vintage that is very pleasant and attractive in its youth, but with sufficient consistency and concentration to increase in complexity over the next 10 years. In recent years, it is perhaps the 2012 vintage that most resembles it.

## Press Review

**Sarah Marsh, Autumn 2018** : Fresh and peppery