

Domaine Eugene Carrel Savoie



The Jongieux valley. At right, Sebastien, Eugene, and Olivier.



The Rhone river defines the limit of the appellation.

Domaine Eugene Carrel is located in the village of Jongieux, which is the largest of the 17 appellations of the Savoie region, in the beginnings of the French Alps. It is situated about 40 miles southwest of Geneva, in between the Rhone River (near its start) and Lake Bourget, France's largest lake. The Jongieux vineyards are very steep, southwest-facing slopes created by ancient glaciers. The altitude is between 400 and 500 meters, yet the microclimate is very warm. The ideal clay-limestone slopes of the Jongieux appellation allow the grapes to ripen more fully than in any other Savoy regions, due to 2-3 hours more sun daily. As a result, the wines are not only fuller, but also more balanced and fresher, because there is far less need for chaptalization. Indeed, the regions' top Cru, Marestel, is located in Jongieux.

Domaine Carrel's clients include virtually every local restaurant, Paris bistros, as well as top Savoie gastronomic destinations such as Veyrat. Little wonder, then, that their wines were unknown in the USA -- until recently. The estate cultivates the traditional varieties of the region, namely Jacquere (bottled as Vin de Savoie Jongieux Blanc), Altesse, and the unique red Mondeuse. While the Savoyard varietals maybe unknown, and the labeling somewhat confusing, Domaine Carrel wines deliver original and expressive flavors that are in perfect harmony with the wide variety of foods we enjoy today. They are compelling and accessible wines from a superb winemaker that await discovery.

The **Jongieux Blanc**, made from the native Jacquere grape, exemplifies Hugh Johnson's characterization of this varietal: "you are drinking bottled mountain air." Working with fully ripe, yet delicate grapes with a low natural sugar/alcohol level, Carrel uses a pneumatic press to extract flavor and aromas, and ferments in stainless steel tanks at low temperatures. He blocks the malolactic fermentation and keeps a small amount of the wine's natural CO₂ to further enhance its freshness and vitality. Bottling takes place in January, after the wine is stabilized in the naturally cold Alpine ambiance.

The **Altesse**, also known as **Roulette de Savoie**, ripens more fully and is never chapaltalized. The region's warm microclimate enables this unique varietal, which originated in Cyprus and was planted in the Savoy region for the first time in the 15th century, to thrive. Indeed, although it was wiped out by phylloxera, the Altesse was replanted in Jongieux after WWII. Carrel ferments places in thermo-regulated tanks and allows malolactic formation to occur for only two-thirds of the volume, to ensure that the wine is both lively and rich. The wine's ample texture and apple, citrus, apricot, and melon notes place it somewhere in between a Chardonnay from the Cotes de Beaune and a Marsanne-Rousane blend from the Rhone.

The unique **Jongieux Rose** is a blend of Gamay and Mondeuse. In light of the ripeness in 2009, Sebastien Carrel decided to use a blend of 80% Gamay and 20% Mondeuse. The Gamay saw 12 hours of maceration with the skins at low temperatures before being "bled off" (*saigné*). The more robust and deeply colored Mondeuse fruit was pressed (like a white wine) to preserve freshness. The Jongieux Rose was bottled in mid-January 2008 after 3 months of development on its fine lees in concrete tanks. It is a Rose of exceptional freshness and concentration which derives from the unique blend of native grapes and the Alpine environment. Flavors and aromas of black cherry, strawberry, citrus, flowers and minerals have made it a favorite in the Savoie region's finest restaurants.

