

MEUNIER

The Black Sheep of Champagne



Society of Wine Educators 43rd Annual Conference

Washington, DC — August 2019 — Alan Tardi

«BLACK SHEEP»

- “Odd or disreputable member of a group”
- “A disgrace to the family or someone who just doesn't seem to belong.”
- Something that is different from and inferior to something else.
- Origin of the expression: Rare presence of a sheep with black fleece in a flock of white sheep.

Meunier vs. Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Pinot Noir

- Likely brought to Champagne from Burgundy when St Bernard founded Clairvaux Abbey in the Aube in 1115.
- Preferred grape of Dom Perignon due to its consistency and ability to hold up over time.
- Character, structure, muscularity + finesse.
- Able to create brilliant & long-lived wines in many different places.
- **Grand Cru status** in both Burgundy and Champagne.
- Probably result of a **natural cross between a Pinot prototype and Gouais Blanc**.
- Genetically unstable & subject to mutation:
lots of progenies.



Chardonnay

- Genetic offspring of Pinot Noir.
- Creates full-bodied, well structured potentially long-lived white wines, often of exceptional character.
- Takes well to wood ageing.
- **Grand Cru status** in Burgundy and Champagne.
- Ability to take root and grow well many different places throughout the world.



Pinot Meunier

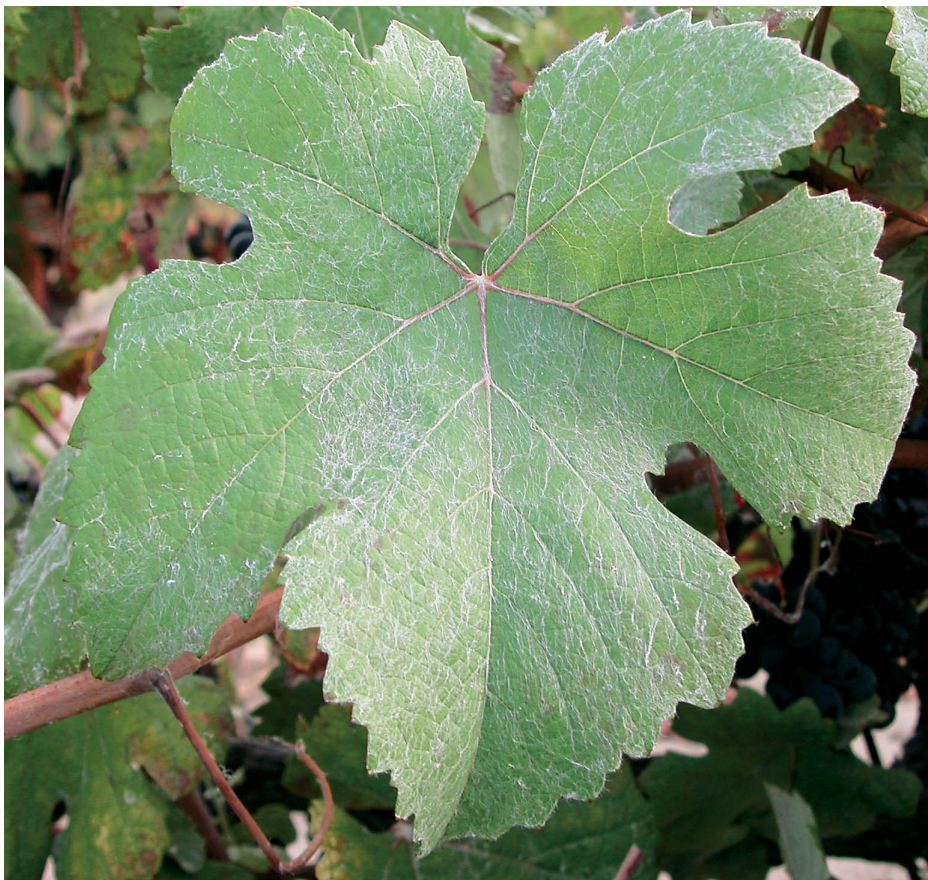


- Historically considered the “Odd Man Out” of Champagne .
 - Thought to lack the noble character, structure and finesse of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.
 - Widely thought to lack the ability to age.
 - Not entitled to Grand or Premier Cru status even when made entirely of grapes planted in Grand/Premier cru vineyards.
 - Meunier grapes/must = lower value.
- Generally viewed as a ‘**workhorse**’ grape to bulk up blends and an ‘**insurance policy**’ against shortages due to frost.

Meunier

- Late budding, early ripening making it less susceptible to frost.
- Resistant to coulure, oidium, peronospora & millerandage.
- Thin-skinned. Fruit forward. Pronounced acidity. Soft tannins. Abundant anthocyanins – dark color.
- Generally prefers cooler north-facing slopes and alluvial soils.





- Genetic mutation of Pinot Noir that reduces vine's intake of a plant hormone **gibberellic acid** resulting in a slight stunting of grape growth and a **white powdery substance in the epidermal layer of the leaves.**
- Mutation occurs only in cells of the epidermal layer of the leaves (other cells are unaffected), making Meunier a '**Chimera**' in plant genetics.

- White powder = flour = name: *Meunier* (Miller).
- *Farineaux, Noirin Enfariné* (France). *Dusty Miller* (England) *Müllerebbe* (Germany).
- Known as "Schwarzriesling" (Germany)
 - Called simply **MEUNIER** in Champagne.

Provenance

- **Pinot Noir** first mentioned in Burgundy in 14th century.
- **1115:** Bernard, monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Citeaux near Dijon, goes north to create Clairvaux Abbey near Bar-sur-Aube.
- Brings more sophisticated viticulture practices to Champagne.
- First written mention of **Pinot Meunier** in 17th century:



CHAPITRE XI.

Des Vignes.

LE Raisin est vn fruit si agreable & delicieux, que l'on a crû deuoir en faire vn Chapitre, tant pour en faire connoistre les especes, que la maniere de le cultiuer, & pour commencer par le plus hâtif.

La Vigne précoce, ou Morillon hâtif, ou de la Magdelaine, est vn Raisin noir plus curieux que bon, dont la peau est fort dure,

DES BONS FRUITS. 159
& fort sujet aux Mouches.

Le Morrillon taconné vient en suite; il est meilleur que le plus hâtif, & est excellent à faire du Vin, charge beaucoup, & sa feuille est blanche & farineuse.

Le Morillon noir ordinaire, est fort doux & sucré, & excellent à manger, & fait de meilleur Vin: En Bourgogne on le nomme Pineau, & à Orleans l'Auerna.

Le Morillon blanc est aussi excellent, la peau en est plus dure.

L'ABREGÉ
DES BONS
FRUITS
AVEC LA MANIERE
de les connoître, & de
cultiver les Arbres.

*Reven & augmenté par l'Autheur, de
plusieurs excellens & nouveaux Fruits.*
Divisé par Chapitres, selon les Espèces.



A PARIS,
Chez CHARLES DE SERCY, au Palais, au
Sixième Pillier de la Grande Salle, vis-à-vis
la Montée de la Cour des Aydes,
à la Bonne-Foy couronné.

M. DC. LXXV.
AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.

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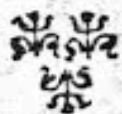
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DES BONS
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AVEC LA MANIERE
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cultiver les Arbres.

*Reveu, corrigé & augmenté de
plusieurs experiences sur le fait
du Jardinage, & de quantité
de nouveaux & excellents
Fruits.*

Par Jean MERLET, ECUIER.
TROISIEME EDITION.



A PARIS,
Chez CHARLES DE SERCY, au sixième
Pilier de la Grand'Salle du Palais,
vis-à-vis la Montée de la Cour des
Aydes, à la Bonne Foy Couronnée.

M. DC. XC.
Avec Privilege du Roy

Le Morillon taconné, ou Meunier, à cause qu'il a ses feuilles blanches & farineuses, vient ensuite; il est meilleur que le plus hâtif, est excellent à faire du Vin, & charge beaucoup.

Le Morillon noir ordinaire, est fort doux & sucré, excellent à manger, & fait de meilleur Vin: En Bourgo- ne on le nomme, Pineau; & à Or- leans, l'Auverna.

- It is not clear exactly when or where the mutation occurred
- ...but seems likely it took place *after* Pinot Noir settled in Champagne, perhaps in response to the cooler climate.

If this is the case, it would make Pinot Meunier *the* Native Son/Daughter (grape) of Champagne.

- In 1958 meunier accounted for 48% of Champagne vineyards. Currently 32%+ of total vineyard plantings in Champagne.
- About 10,000 ha planted in France, mostly in Champagne around the Paris Basin area (small amount in Loire Valley).
- About 2,500 ha in Germany (mostly Württemberg, some in Rheinpfalz and Franconia) with sporadic plantings in England, Australia, New Zealand, US (Oregon, CA).

In Praise of Meunier

- Contributes **fruitiness, roundness & acidity**, liveliness and freshness to a blend.
- Has its own **unique flavor profile and personality** which adds character to a blend and stands out on its own.
- Contrary to popular opinion, Meunier has the **ability to withstand the test of time**.
- Krug has long used relatively high percentages (15-25%) of Meunier in its Grande Cuvée. The 1928 Krug vintage contained 29% Meunier.
- A whole new generation of smaller grower-producers has helped bring Meunier out of the closet.
- Large houses are also beginning to spotlight the variety.

Let's Taste!



- Nine 100% Meunier wines from four producers in a variety of typologies.
 - Where was each wine made, who made it, how.
- 1. What are the prominent characteristics of each wine and what is the common thread between them?**
 - 2. How does Meunier show on its own and what might it contribute to a blend?**
 - 3. How do Meunier wines differ from a comparable Pinot Noir or Chardonnay?**

I. SALMON

Montagne de Reims — Chaumuzy

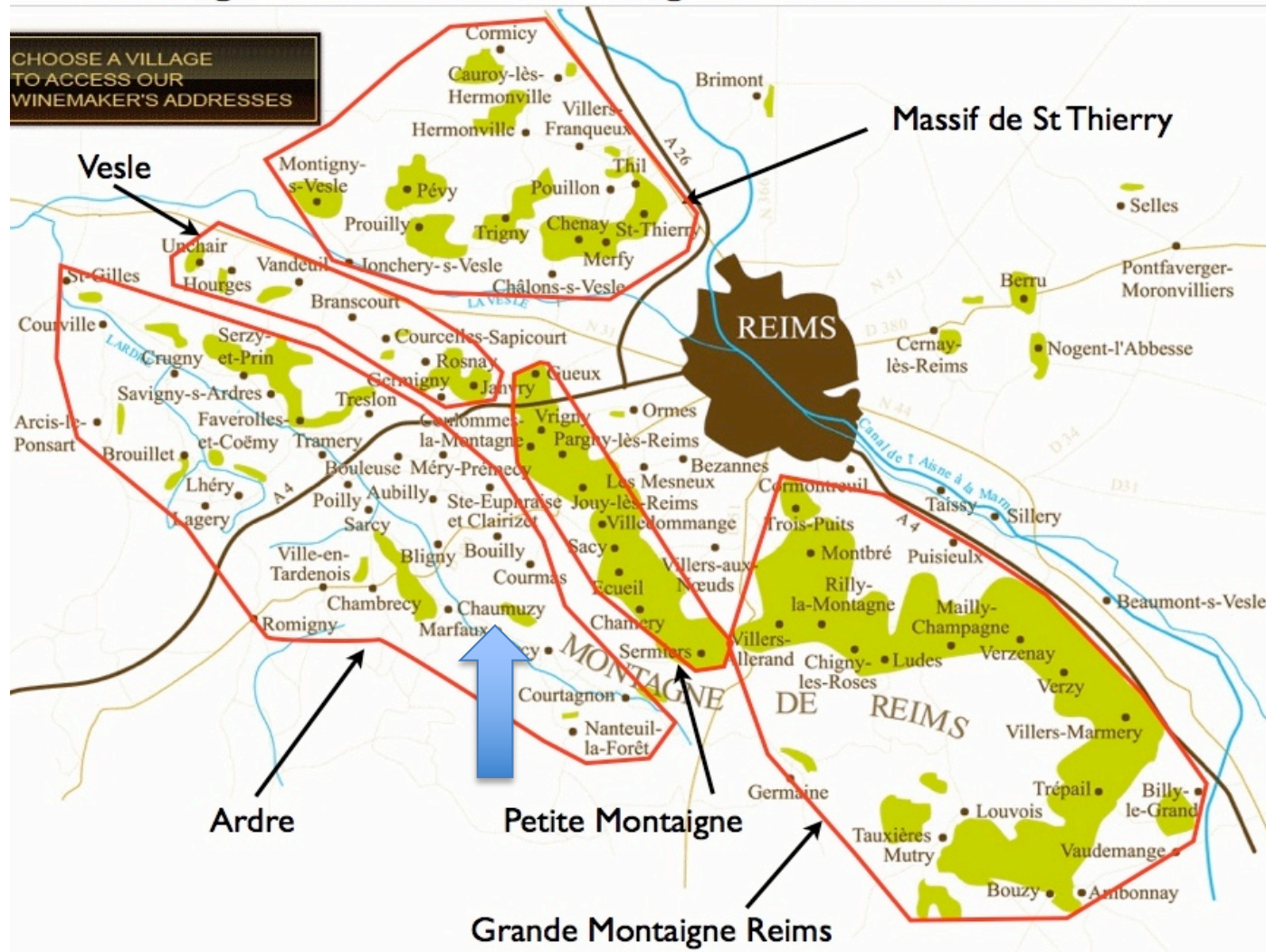
- Michel Salmon, born into a family of vigneron in Chaumuzy, slowly acquires vineyard parcels of his own.
- 1958: Starts winery and begins producing wine under his own label.
- Son Olivier joins company in 1983.
- Alexandre joins company in 2003.



- **9.6 ha of vineyard. 75 parcels; 85% meunier.**
- 90,000 bottles/year.

Vallée de l'Ardre — Chaumuzy

Montagne de Reims Sub-Region and its Sub-Zones



- Vallée de l'Ardre: 1163.5 ha vines. **67.8% PM**, 22.7% PN, 9.4% Ch.

Chaumuzy



1. SALMON Coteaux Champenois Chaumuzy Blanc 2015

- 100% meunier fermented white.
- Matured in barrel.
- Vintage 2015: severe drought near end of growing season created smaller berries and less quantity (-20%) but overall quality very high.



2. SALMON Champagne 100% Meunier Brut MV

- 100% meunier from vineyards in Chaumuzy and Ville-en-Tardenois.
- 2014 base year + 2013
- Undergoes full malo.
- 7 g/L dosage.



II. GEOFFROY

Vallée de la Marne — Cumières

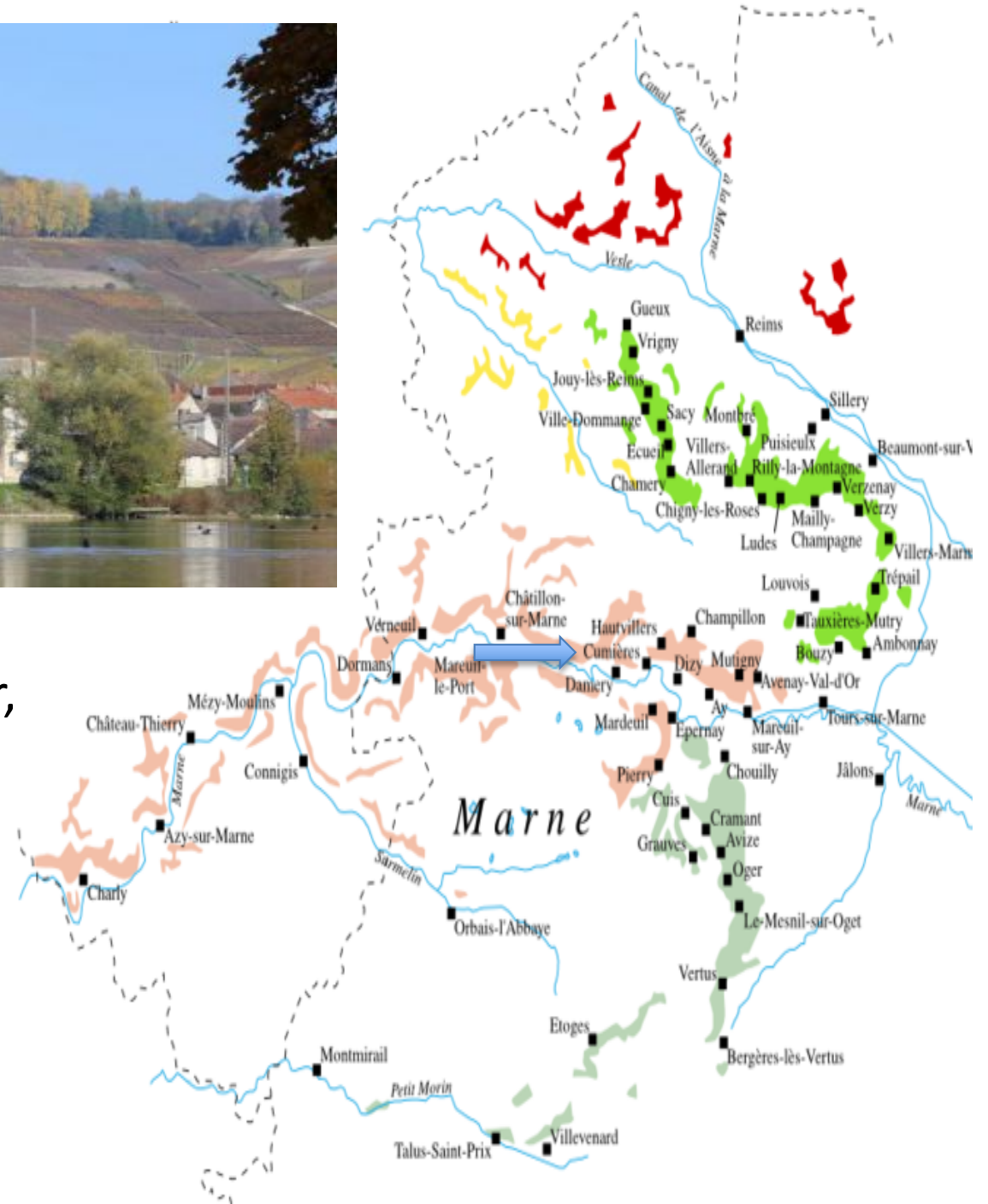
- Roots in Cumières back to 17th century.
- Began bottling with own label in mid-1950s.
- Jean-Baptiste joins family winery in late '80s.
- Moves winemaking operations to Aÿ in 2008.
- **14 ha of vine in 35 plots:** 24% chardonnay, 34% meunier, 42% pinot noir.

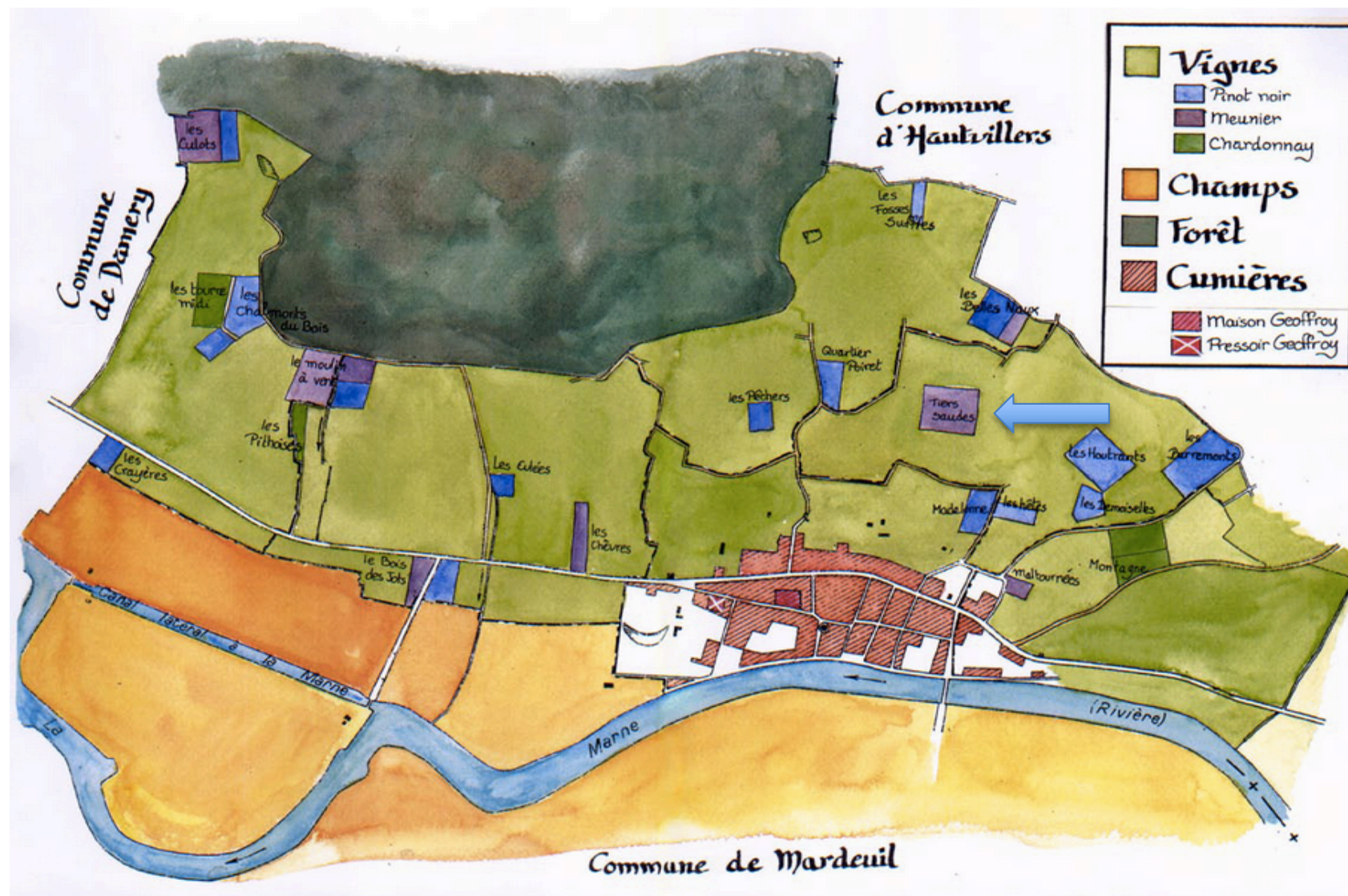


Cumières



- Vineyard surface in Cumières: 171.6 hectares. 53.6% Pinot Noir, 27.4% Meunier, 18.8% Chardonnay
- Overall, Meunier dominates Vallée de la Marne (61%):
- Late bud-break and early ripening make Meunier less vulnerable in frost-prone valley.





- Diverse soils: **Sparnacien** (clay-limestone), Chalk, Sand, Limestone, Small Pebbles (alluvial).
- Mesoclimate: proximity to Marne River increases humidity, moderates temperature, reflects sunlight to the vines.

3. GEOFFROY Cumières Rouge Coteaux Champenois 2012

- 100% Meunier
- Made only in vintages when Meunier does exceptionally well: 2004, 2008, 2012.
- 60 year-old vines.
- **Silex** (flint and sand-based soil formed from a mixture of clay, limestone and silica) over marl subsoil.
- **Vintage 2012:** April frost, hail; wet summer. Burst of heat mid-August changed everything. Low quantity, exceptional quality.



4. GEOFFROY Champagne Blanc de Noir “Les Tiersades” 2013

- 100% Meunier from single parcel “Les Tiersades.” Planted 1972.
- Silt and sand over calcareous Marne deposit.
- Primary fermentation w/ native yeast. 75% barrel, 25% enamel. NO MLF.
- Brut Nature.
- 48 months *sur lie*.
- **Vintage 2013:** cool spring lead to late harvest. Considerable hail damage in some areas. Lower yield, overall very good quality.

III. LAHERTE FRÈRES

Vallée de la Marne — Chavot Courcourt

- Founded by Jean-Baptiste Laherte in 1889, who is credited with originally planting most of the vines in Chavot.
- 11 hectares; 75 parcels.
- Aurélien Laherte, seventh generation, spearheads winery since 2005.
- 80% of the estate's wines are fermented and matured in wood.



Chavot-Courcourt



- Meunier 63,60 ha, Pinot Noir 6 ha, Chardonnay 55,40 ha.
- Further south; slightly warmer.
- Less influence of the Marne river.
- Silty-clay soil with silex and limestone.



5. LAHERTE FRÈRES Champagne Rosé d'Assemblage de Meunier MV

- 100% Meunier:
 - 30% maceration
 - 10% red wine
 - 60% white wine (40% barrel-aged reserve wine)
- 2015 60% +2014 40%
- Calcareous clay soils rich in silex.
- Primary fermentation in vats, foudres & barrels.
- Partial malo + 6 months on lees.
- Hand disgorged.
- Extra-brut: 2.5 g/L



6. LAHERTE FRÈRES Champagne “Les Vignes d'Autrefois” 2013

- 100%* Meunier from select parcels in Chavot and Mancy.
- Clay & silty soils, flint & pebbles; chalky subsoil.
- Old vines planted 1947 and 1953.
- Alcoholic fermentation in barrel; 6 months on lees.
- No malo.
- Disgorgement by hand.
- Extra-brut: 2-4 g/L
- **Vintage 2013:** cool spring lead to late harvest. Lower yield, overall very good.

IV. MOUSSÉ FILS

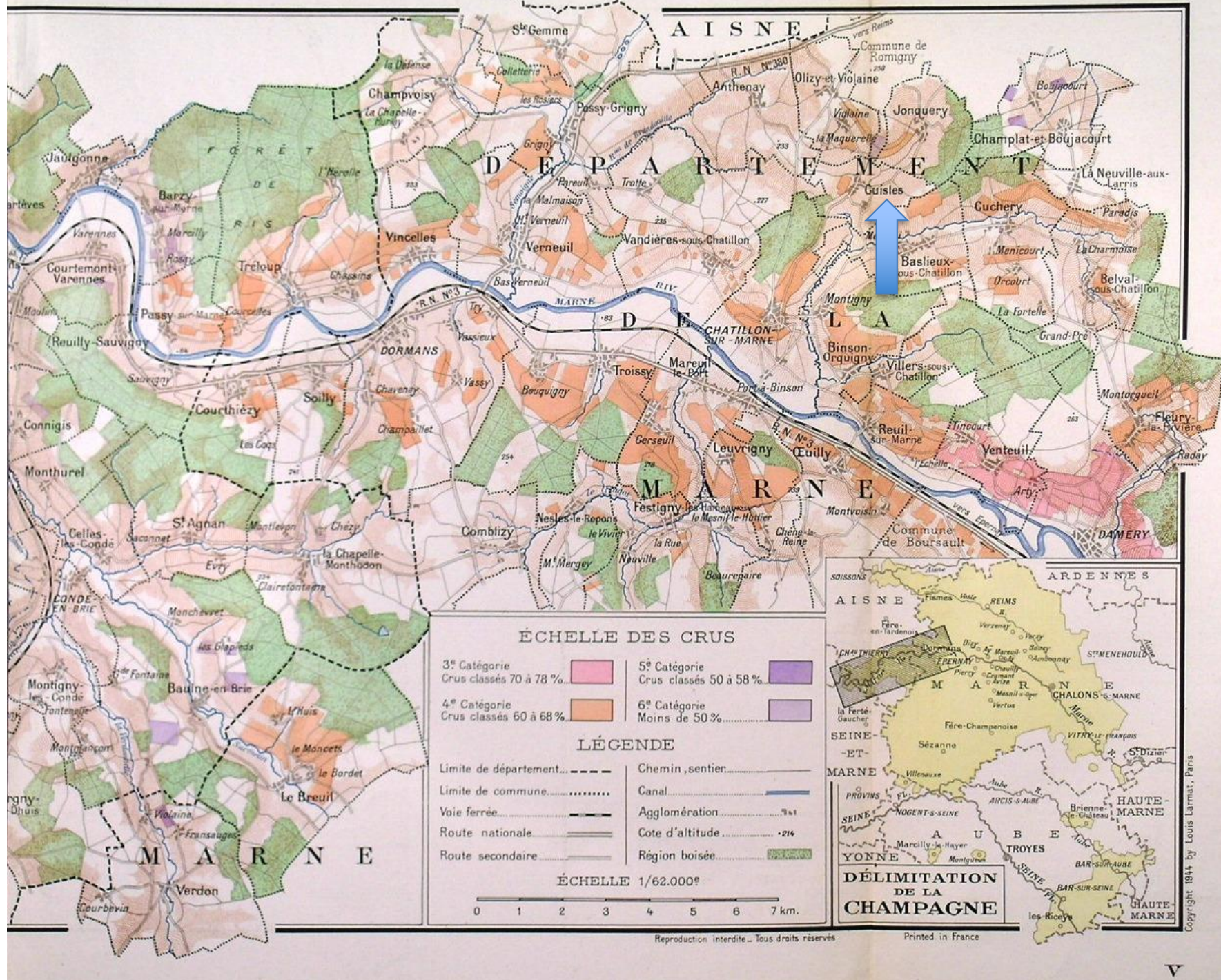
Vallée de la Marne — Cuisles

- *Vignerons* since 1629 and winemakers for 12 generations.
- Based in Cuisles since 1880.
- First Champagne bottled by Eugène Moussé in 1923.
- Edmund took helm in 1947, Jean-Marc in 1976, and Cedric in 2003.
- “*Lutte raisonnée*”; organic practices (not certified).
- 60,000 bottles/year (80K max. cap.)
- 9.4 ha vineyards in Cuisles and nearby villages.
- 80% meunier, 16% PN, 4% CH



VINICOLE L. LARMAT

VALLÉE DE LA MARNE ET L' AISNE





7. MOUSSÉ FILS Champagne Rosé D'Assemblage “Effusion” MV

- Product of 2 separate **Perpetual Reserves** (aka ‘Solera’) both 2003-2016:
- White: 92% Meunier + 8% PN from vineyards in Cuisles, Jonquery, Olizy, Châtillon sur Marne.
- Red: 100% meunier from single parcel “Les Bouts de la Ville” in Cuisles aged for 2 yrs in used barrels.
- Red wine (12%) added to white for second fermentation.
- 22 months sur lie,
- Dosage **4 g/L**



8. MOUSSÉ FILS Champagne “Les Vignes de Mon Village” MV

- 100% Meunier exclusively from vineyards in Cuisles.
- 4-strata Soil:
 - 20 cm clay topsoil,
 - 40 cm porous clay + 80% sand,
 - 30 cm illite,
 - limestone marl subsoil.
- 50% 2015 + 50% 2014.
- 2 years sur lie under cork.
- **Zero dosage**

Ratafia de Champagne

- Technically a *mistelle*: liqueur or cordial
- Made in Champagne area for centuries; received PGI in 2015.
- Made through the process of *mutage*: addition of grape spirit (brandy) to stop/prevent fermentation.
- In Champagne *rebêche* portion of the pressing is used.

Fractional Pressing Champagne

4,000 kg standard press unit (aka “*marc*”)

Prescribed yield: 102 liters of juice per 160 kg of grapes

[Free-run juice]

Cuvée: first 2050 liters of juice to emerge from press.

Taille: next 500 liters of juice. May be used for Champagne.

Rebêche: remaining liquid pressed out of grapes. [Max 2,666 liters/4,000 kg grapes.] May *not* be used for Champagne.

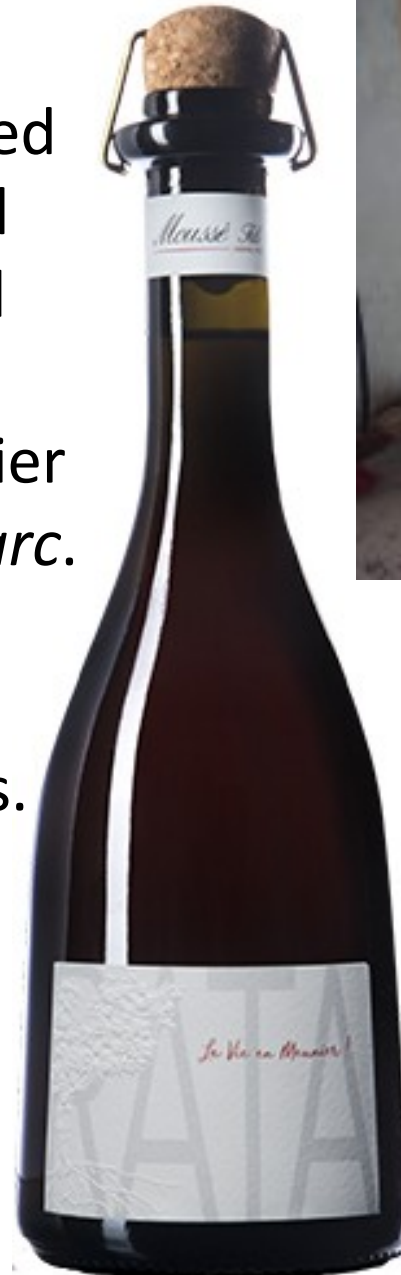
Terminology

- ***Mutage*** is a process; ***Mistelle*** is a category.
- **Fortified Wine vs. Mistelle:**
 - Fortified Wine = the addition of brandy to a *finished wine* (fully complete fermentation) in order to fortify or stabilize it.
 - Mistelle = the addition of grape alcohol (marc de Champagne) to *grape must or juice at the very early stages of fermentation*, before it can be considered wine, which effectively stops/prevents fermentation resulting in a moderately alcoholic sweet wine.
- Name thought they come from Latin ‘Rata Fiat’:
 - Rata = ratify
 - Fiat = unalterable decree. ‘it is done’.
- Typically drunk at conclusion of weddings, treaties, accords, etc.

9. MOUSSÉ FILS Ratafia de Champagne IGP “La Vie en Munier”

NV

- Communal still installed in center of Cuisles in 1947.
- “Secret; family recipe created by Edmond Moussé, passed down to son Jean-Marc and then Cedric.
- Double distillation of meunier pomace + must to make *marc*.
- Mixed with meunier juice from the rebêche pressing.
- Elevage in barrique for 2 yrs.
- Barrels only partially filled to promote oxidation.
- Final ABV: 17.45 ABV
- Residual sugar: 124 g/L



Questions, Comments, Observations?



Suggested Retail Prices

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. SALMON Coteaux Champenois Chaumuzy Blanc (Meunier) 2015 | \$32.00 |
| 2. SALMON Champagne 100% Meunier Extra-Brut MV | \$45.00 |
| 3. GEOFFROY Cumières Rouge Coteaux Champenois (Meunier) 2013 | \$65.00 |
| 4. GEOFFROY Champagne Brut Nature “Les Tiersaudes” 2013 | \$95.00 |
| 5. LAHERTE FRÈRES Champagne Rosé d’Assemblage Meunier NV | \$54.00 |
| 6. LAHERTE FRÈRES Champagne “Les Vignes d’Autrefois” 2013 | \$70.00 |
| 7. MOUSSÉ FILS Champagne Rosé “Effusion” NV | \$55.00 |
| 8. MOUSSÉ FILS Champagne “Les Vignes de Mon Village” NV | \$58.00 |
| 9. MOUSSÉ FILS Ratafia “La Vie En Meunier” NV (500 ml) | \$45.00 |



CHAMPAGNE,
UNCORKED

THE HOUSE of KRUG
and the TIMELESS ALLURE
of the WORLD'S MOST
CELEBRATED DRINK

ALAN TARDI

Thanks for your attention!

Thanks to Society of Wine Educators
and all our volunteers!

Special thanks to **Alexandre Salmon,**
Jean-Baptiste Geoffroy, Aurélien
Laherte, Cedric Moussé
Skurnik Wines & Williams Corner Wine

**Vive le Champagne & Vive le
Meunier!**

