



Arlequin One-Bottle Club
July 2018
Domaine Didier Dagueneau
Blanc Fumé de Pouilly 2012
Loire Valley, France

Varietal: *100% Sauvignon Blanc*

Winemaker Didier Dagueneau, the prodigiously bearded wildman of the Loire, made some of the best Pouilly-Fumés and Sancerres ever. Inspired by the great wines of Burgundy and other top regions (his mentors were Edmond Vatan and Henri Jayer) and emboldened by the traditions of his grandfather, Louis Dagueneau, Didier created terroir-driven Pouilly-Fumé of extraordinary dimension, sourced from top vineyard sites around St. Andelain. He acquired his first parcel, 1.2 hectares of *En Chailloux*, and began to vinify under his own label in the 1982 vintage. In 1985, he added the now infamous *Silex*, and in 1988, *Pur Sang*. He died in 2008 when his ultra-light plane crashed, but his son, Benjamin, has kept the wines at the same level. Extremely low vineyard yields, biodynamic farming and, unusually, aging in oak barrels result in some of planet's greatest Sauvignons.

Vintage While much of the Loire Valley suffered through April frosts and a huge October rainstorm, Pouilly-Fumé (and its sister appellation across the Loire, Sancerre) escaped much of the worst weather.

Vineyard Thanks to Benedictine monks, wine growing in Pouilly dates to the 5th Century, when the area was called Pauliacum super Fluvium Ligerim ("Pauliacum on the River Loire"). Located on the right bank of the Loire in the valley's far eastern reaches, the

region's soils are marked by four distinct varieties: two types of limestone (Oxfordian and Portlandian), Kimmeridgian limestone marl, and flinty clay dating to the Cretaceous period. Each yields distinctively different Sauvignon Blanc. This cuvée is the Domaine's only wine that is not terroir-specific. It comes from sites that include a parcel of 15-20 year-old vines on flinty-clay soils, as well as the *lieu-dit* of Les Coques, planted in limestone marl.

Winemaking While most grapes in Pouilly are harvested mechanically, the Dagueneau domaine has always picked fruit by hand. Since the beginning, the wines at Dagueneau have always been raised in oak barrels. Through extensive experimentation, there is always a mix of sizes, shapes and percentage of new and used barrels which are exploited to varying degree depending on vineyard and vintage. The Dagueneaus have worked closely with the world's top coopers to create some uniquely-shaped, very low-toast barrels (e.g. "cigares" and small *foudres*) that offer nuanced benefits of lees contact and/or specific oxygen exchange, all tiny facets that add up to a finer product in the end. For this cuvée, Benjamin ferments the juice in 3-4 year-old oak, and then matures the wine in both neutral wood (to add texture) and stainless steel (to maintain the freshness).

Tasting Notes This bottling is always Dagueneau's most direct and accessible expression of Pouilly-Fumé. Under Benjamin's direction, the wine has gained depth and complexity with each vintage. Marked by stony minerality, a silken texture and crystalline purity, the palate offers nuanced flavors of grapefruit and apricots. A lightly smoky note, often likened to gunflint, characterizes wines grown in Pouilly's limestone soils. Shy when first released, that note is clearer in the wine now, at six of age. Incidentally, the label depicts a score by François Christin, horn player with the Orchestre National de France and a close friend of the late Didier Dagueneau. The first two lines are taken from the song *La Mauvaise Réputation* ("The Bad Reputation") by Georges Brassens, while the next lines are Christin's own interpretation of that theme.

Food Pairing This silky Sauvignon reveals its complexity an hour or two after opening. To do it justice, serve it over a leisurely meal that begins with a warm goat cheese salad, then segues to a main course of simply sauced shellfish or flaky white fish, dressed with fresh herbs and lemon zest.