



Les jardins du Domaine Ostertag

- The gardens of Domaine Ostertag -

Every winegrower has a personal vision of his job, but one thing tends to influence this more than anything : the natural, historic and social environment in which he works.

If one had to summarize the history of Alsace, "chaotic" would be very appropriate and not only for the recent history made by Men, but also for the geological history of this singular land. The tectonic mechanisms, the sea going back and forth, the eruptions and collapses have sculpted here a unique and complex landscape, that reaches its peak in the unmatched geological complexity of its wine terroirs.

The vine settled very early in Alsace thanks to the Romans, but then in the Middle-Ages the feudal system progressively robbed the peasants of their land to the advantage of the Lords and the Church who could farm vast pieces of land thanks to the docile peasant workforce.

It is only after the French Revolution that the People took its land back. The recovered territories were then split into a multitude of small plots and distributed evenly among the farming families. At this stage many varieties of grapes had already been introduced in Alsace, and the ampelographic parcelling added to the physical parcelling.

This historical heritage has shaped a very complex territory, which has some benefits but also many drawbacks for a winegrower. Anyway, this general "chaos" is a reality in Alsace and it is the base of the region's, the men's and the wines' complexity ; a complexity that tends to frighten rather than fascinate, in our globalised world where everything needs to be simplified and vulgarized for the comprehension of the consuming masses.

But Light always emerges from Chaos and we are part of these generations who always knew peace and who could dedicate ourselves entirely to our vocation, light-hearted and open to the outside world, and with a certain comfort of equipments and infrastructures.

Yet at Domaine Ostertag we have never gone over to the dark side of modern agriculture. From 3 hectares in 1966, year of Irma and Adolphe Ostertag's first bottling, the domaine has expanded to 15 hectares in 2017, and yet very little has changed in our approach of viticulture, even having to deal with a more and more difficult economic context and fluctuating crops.

For the modern-days farmer, who is constantly trying to optimize and rationalize his work tool, this land parcelling is an obstacle to his development, and the temptation to gather bigger parcels on less numerous sites is high although not very coherent with Alsace's reality.

However, for the winegrower who is dedicated to his land and proud of his roots, it is a precious advantage to be able to harvest the fruit of multiple and all different terroirs, exploring the full potential of each plot, catching the expression of a place in a wine, allowing each and every small **garden** of vines to show its real personality.

In this context indeed, a winegrower is just like a gardener. With such a diversity of terroirs, there are no more unique recipes or models of viticulture. Each vine with its soil, sub-soil, micro-climate, plant, endemic fauna and flora that constitute the terroir, has its own expression, needs and cycle that we need to take into account whenever we act.

At Domaine Ostertag, our winegrowing reality is based entirely on this diversity : we grow vines on 88 different plots, that gather 172 actual cadastral parcels, all of that on 5 villages : 88 small **gardens** of vines that we look after with a constant care to highlight each place's own identity.

Just like in gardening, the work is strenuous but always driven by a strong sense of esthetics, harmony and balance that are inseparable from the notion of Great Wine.

For that reason, we can say that we are among the last gardeners of this planet where everywhere intensive agriculture, with its army of machines, is dehumanizing the countryside, and exploits rather than cultivates.

In the Domaine's own classification, the **Vins de Fruit** gather all the parcels of a single grape variety, that are located outside of the Lieu-Dit or Grand Cru vineyards and that, if isolated, would have a less interesting potential than what they each bring to the whole blend.

They express the personality of a grape on a village-scale, and the diversity of the **gardens** they originate from.

Les vieilles vignes de SYLVANER : 10 gardens of vines, of an average of 55 years old, in Epfig and Nothalten, on 5 natures of soil : sandstone ; clay and sandstone ; marl and clay ; granite ; alluvium.

PINOT BLANC *les jardins* : 6 gardens of vines in Epfig, in the Domaine garden and the Fronholz, on 2 natures of soil : clay and silt ; marl and sandstone.

PINOT GRIS *les jardins* : 4 gardens of vines in Epfig, Itterswiller and Albé, on 3 natures of soil : clay and sandstone ; loess ; schist.

RIESLING *les jardins* : 13 gardens of vines in Epfig, Itterswiller and Nothalten, on 3 natures of soil based on Vosges red sandstone : sand and sandstone ; clay and sandstone ; sandstone and volcanic.

GEWURZTRAMINER *les jardins* : 6 gardens of vines in Epfig, on 2 natures of soil : clay and sandstone ; marl and clay.

PINOT NOIR *les jardins* : 3 gardens of vines, all in Epfig on the top part of the plateau, on 2 natures of soil : sandstone ; clay and sandstone.

Thomas Larmoyer
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