



## **BEST OF 2017: LUIZ GUTIERREZ** featuring Domaine Jean Macle

December 2017

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Jura is famous for vin jaune—yellow wine—for a reason. These rare Sherry-like wines, biologically aged under a veil of yeasts or flor in non-topped up barrels for six years, plus the remaining months of the year the grapes were harvested. In that time, one liter of wine will evaporate to 62 centiliters, which is the capacity of the special bottle, called clavelin, in which they are sold. The style represents no more than five per cent of the total volume of wine from the region, yet it's the unique and distinctive wine that created the reputation for Jura.

Château Chalon is a vin jaune-only appellation in the village of the same name in Jura. The leading producer there is Domaine Macle, which impressed me with a mini-vertical of wines from vintages ending in nine, as the current release is the 2009 Château Chalon. I used that as an excuse to write a short article about them, published at the end of December 2017. They are currently in the very able hands of Laurent Macle, fifth generation of the family making wine in the village, who told me: “According to my father, all vintages ending in nine have been great, except 1939.” After tasting 1979, 1989, 1999 and 2009 I can only agree with that statement. The 2009 seem destined for a brilliant future in bottle, and has to be one of the most powerful recent vintages at Château Chalon. It’s a year of great ripeness and marvelous concentration, and the Macle bottling had notes of aromatic herbs (it made me think of absinthe!) together with young aromas of the Jura twang of the voile, showing it in a subtle way, like the wine has power to take an even longer élevage, while still keeping fresh and floral notes. In fact, when I mentioned that to Laurent he confessed he had kept a barrel of 2009 to see how the wine continues aging under the veil of yeasts. The palate is powerful, but the alcohol is really integrated and unnoticeable. I think this could very well be the modern version of the 1989.

## **Best Vertical/Retrospective Tasting of the Year**

Truth is that I don't do that many verticals, and maybe I should do more... It wasn't a large vertical, but the best I can remember in 2017 happened at Château Chalon, in the cellars of the Macle family. I had asked Laurent Macle to taste some back vintages of Château Chalon and Côtes du Jura, the only two wines traditionally produced at their domaine in the Jura. He came up with a selection of years ending in nine and three, as the current vintages are 2009 for the Château Chalon and 2013 for the Côtes du Jura.

I had an incredible visit with him; he was very happy and we tasted some astonishing wines, including some barrel samples and the current release 2009 Château Chalon that made it to the top three of the year in the region. For Château Chalon, on top of the 2009 we also had 1999, 1989 and 1979. Vintages ending in nine seem to be very consistent. As the year they are currently selling of the Côtes du Jura is 2013 we also tasted the 2003, 1993, 1983 and 1973, where the star was the 1983.

