

Ludovic Chanson: a wine maker who keeps his feet on the ground

Prior to starting out in the wine business, Ludovic Chanson recommends anyone to have a few internships in order to learn the profession, to try to keep some cash flow... and to avoid breaking the equipment.

In 2006, Ludovic Chanson decided to quit his job at a pharmaceutical lab and become a winemaker in Touraine. The 42 year old, passionate about the Loire and Chenin Blanc, is in his 6th vintage and tells us more about his career change.

How did you become a winemaker?

I worked for 14 years in pharmaceutical research, during which time my only hobbies were food and wine. I was undecided between opening a wine bar and becoming a winemaker. One of my friends, Vincent Carème, a winemaker from Vouvray, recommended getting training from the Ambroise wine school. It gave me a certification in operations management, 16 months training at the time (now reduced to 12 months) with 16 weeks of internships, leading to a diploma that allowed me to get some help financially. I gained management skills, marketing skills, wine tasting skills, and wine production skills. The difficult part of being a winemaker is that we are often alone in the beginning and have to manage the administrative operations as well as the wine making.



What advice would you give to the young generation?

At first, it is all about the passion for this profession, essential for the launch, but we are confronted with money issues very quickly. At the end of my training, the lab in which I worked fired everyone. In 2008, I was able to start my winery thanks to the money from the social plan: out of the €100,000 I got, €80,000 was invested on the creation of my business, half for equipment and half in cash flow. At first, I made mistakes, I hired too many people for the harvest, and I broke my wine press – twice! After 4 months, I had no money. Prior to creating a wine business, it is important to take the time to do internships in different winemakers in order to learn the profession. No need to go to Chile, you can reach out for the wineries in the Rhône, Beaujolais and Jura, for example.

You are using organic grapes, is it complicated?

Based on my experience in pharmaceuticals, I know chemistry and its effects. I couldn't imagine doing anything other than organic wine. The Loire, with the Languedoc, Beaujolais and South-West, remains one of the only regions where people can buy vines at affordable prices. Many of us are settling there, and we try to stick together and help each other. This is useful in case of equipment failure, for example. I harvest everything by hand and sell everything in bottles, no wine cooperative, no trading. My wines are called "natural" because I don't add anything but a slight dose of sulfur. In my opinion, this is the only way to make wine. - Jérémie Couston

