

SOMM

SELECT

Domaine Raphaël Chopin

2015 Régnié “La Ronze”

Beaujolais, France

For all the talk about 2015 being a “vintage of the century” all over Europe, not everything we’ve encountered from this celebrated harvest has been a home run. In Burgundy, especially—whether we’re talking Côte d’Or Pinot Noir or Gamay from Beaujolais—I’ve tasted lots of overly rich, overblown wines. It’s hard to argue with ripeness and power, but when it’s such that it renders the wine unrecognizable, well, I’ll pass.

But, of course, there are magical 2015s. Scores of them, but you have to choose carefully. We’ve been waxing rhapsodic about them for a year-plus now, and the roster of successes has included lots of Cru Beaujolais. When overripe and/or over-extracted, Gamay becomes inky and flat and loses its nuance. But when Cru Beaujolais is perfectly ripe and highly perfumed, with purity and elegance—like today’s Régnié from Raphaël Chopin—you really couldn’t ask for more from a bottle of red wine. It is deep, profoundly mineral, yet fresh and nimble. You get power and persistence without excess weight. It’s a quintessentially superb 2015 wine experience, and an insanely affordable one at that. Is it the “feel-good” wine of the year? I think so!

Chopin is part of Beaujolais’ dynamic younger generation, having launched his domaine in 2009 after purchasing some of his grandfather’s old vines. Based in the village of Lantignié, he farms about five hectares across three appellations—Régnié, Morgon, and Beaujolais-Villages. Some of his vines date as far back as 1905, while

the youngest were planted in 1989, and with this exceptional raw material he's made a big impact in a relatively short period of time. "La Ronze" is a two-hectare plot in Régnié with vines ranging from 40-80 years old and soils comprised of pink granite and schist.

Régnié is a short drive from Morgon, and when you drive there it is impossible not to notice a change in altitude—and, with it, noticeably cooler microclimates in most sites. This is one reason I feel this wine has so much balance versus many wines from lower elevations in Fleurie/Morgon, which were roasted by the heat in 2015. Currently, Chopin farms all his plots according to *'lutte raisonnée'* ('reasoned fight') principles, but is actively pushing his domaine towards full organic conversion and certification.

Régnié, like its southern neighbor, Brouilly, is traditionally thought of as one of the more forwardly fruity crus of Beaujolais, a touch gentler than Morgon in terms of minerality—but there's no shortage of mineral personality in Chopin's 2015 "La Ronze." In fact, it reminded us a lot of Morgon in a more classic vintage. Fermented and aged in cement, it's an exceptionally pure expression of Gamay fruit and Régnié soil. In the glass, it's a near opaque ruby moving to heavy pink hues at the rim. Aromas of black raspberry preserves, cherry blossoms, damp violet, underbrush, white pepper, and crushed stones carry over to the lush and concentrated palate, which stays within the 'medium-plus' boundary and finishes with a fresh flourish of acidity. There's terrific ripeness and palate-coating richness but it is held in check by the mineral component—or, to put it more plainly, it's rich but still has energy. There's still positive evolution (5+ years) ahead of this wine, but it's quite accessible now with about 30 minutes in a decanter. Serve it cool, around 60 degrees, in Burgundy stems and let it shine next to something meaty and rustic, be it juicy grilled burgers or something more classically French, like cassoulet. Versatility is one of this wine's many virtues. Enjoy!

