

Coming into its own: the Baronnie du Dézaley

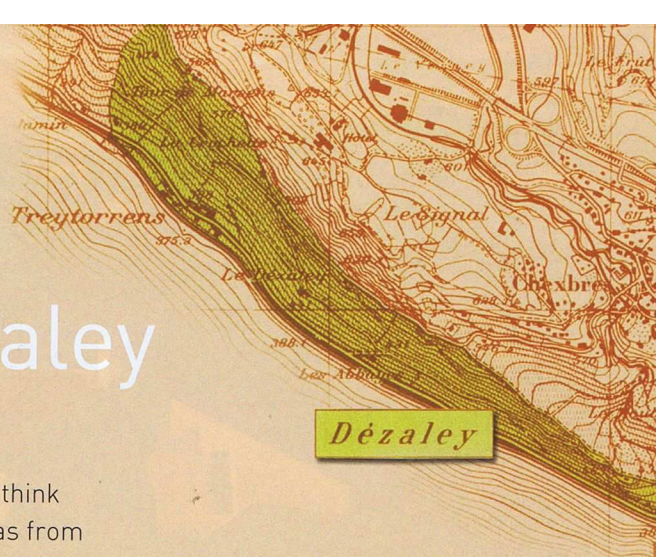
Eva Zwahlen

Founded in 1994, the Baronnie du Dézaley is an association of twelve Vaud winemakers who produce Dézaley – Chasselas grown in one of Switzerland's most spectacular vineyards in the heart of UNESCO-designated heritage site Lavaux with its 1,000 years of history, unique terroir and microclimate. Baronnie members subscribe to a quality charter with strict rules about vine care, winemaking, bottling (only natural corks allowed), and marketing. No wine, for example, can be put on the market before the June following the harvest.

One of the association's major initiatives in promoting Dézaley is their "Les Grands Millésimes" collection – their very finest Dézaley Chasselas wines, six years and older, selected by a small, handpicked panel of experts and available via their website

www.baronnie.ch. Many still think of Swiss wines and Chasselas from Vaud in particular as wines best drunk when young. Connoisseurs know different, however – that while characteristics such as minerality, impressive structure, depth and complexity are present in young Dézaley, they need time to reach their apex.

One of the founders of the Baronnie, Louis-Philippe Bovard – who also founded the Conservatoire du Chasselas in Rivaz, a collection of old Chasselas varieties threatened with extinction – says: "There's no question in anyone's mind now that Dézaley Chasselas wines are world-class." The Baronnie's original goal to make Dézaley known throughout Switzerland and ensure its place as part of Vaud's – and Switzerland's – heritage has long been met. But as Luc Massy, president of



Dézaley



the association since 2004, says: "Although Dézaley is clearly much better known now than before the Baronnie was founded, there's still a way to go in Switzerland. There are restaurants in Zurich, for example, with wine lists that practically only feature wines from abroad and seldom a Dézaley."

When the Baronnie du Dézaley gets things to the point, he says, that wine lovers pick a Dézaley instead of a Chardonnay to celebrate a big occasion or accompany an haute cuisine dish, and become fully aware of the discoveries to be made from drinking older vintages, the Baronnie will be able to consider its mission accomplished – although far from over, as it gears up to lobby against new cantonal regulations about appellations, a cause that ironically enough has brought it closer to rival association Appellation Dézaley Grand Cru.



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