

Daniel-Étienne Defaix



Daniel-Etienne—or “Danny,” as he is affectionately referred to—calls himself “Le Dernier des Mohicans” (The Last of the Mohicans); in generations past, long aging in Chablis was more the rule than the exception, but today Danny is virtually alone in that practice. The Defaix family – cultivating the vine since the 16th century – owns 26 ha of vines, the vast majority of which are in premier and grand cru vineyards, but Danny designates only his best lots each vintage as cru-level, declassifying the remainder as vil-lages. Long aging, however, is not the only way that Defaix distinguishes himself from the pack. He relies exclusively on indigenous yeasts—a rare practice in Chablis—and his fermentations routinely last between 3-6 weeks (inoculating gets it done in 4-6 days), with malolactic fermentation sometimes requiring two years to finish in his frigid cellar. He favors extraordinarily long lees contact, but employs bâtonnage only for the first two years, and then seldomly.

Young Chablis can be delicious and useful at the table, certainly; but it is only with age that it can attain sublimity. What a rare treat it is, then, to have access to such powerful expressions of a singular terroir released at such a prime point in their development—and at prices well below much villages-level Chassagne-Montrachet or Meursault.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Lutte Raisonnée
- **Treatments:** Synthetic treatments only when necessary
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to promote soil health
- **Soils:** Kimmeridgian limestone-clay marls
- **Vines:** Average age 42 years, trained in Guyot and planted at 6,500 vines/ha
- **Yields:** Controlled with severe winter pruning, debudding, and green harvesting
- **Harvest:** All wines are machine harvested.
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming and pressing, wines ferment spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks for 3-4 weeks
- **Extraction:** Bâtonnage employed during the first 2 years of élevage
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** Chaptalization when necessary
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, beginning in tank in the spring and lasting up to 2 years

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Wines age in stainless-steel tanks for 3-10 years
- **Lees:** 1 year for village wines, 3 years for 1er Cru and Grand Cru wines
- **Fining and Filtration:** Bentonite fining, diatomaceous earth filtration when necessary
- **Sulfur:** Applied after fermentation, at rackings, and at bottling