

**WEINAKADEMIE ÖSTERREICH, RUST
UNIT 7 – JUNE 18, 2018**

ABSTRACT – TWO PAGES



**THE MÂCONNAIS – THE SOUTHERN PART OF BURGUNDY – WITH FOCUS ON
THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS WHITE WINE APPELLATIONS
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Copenhagen, June 12, 2018

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(Word count: 4.979)

THE MÂCONNAIS – THE SOUTHERN PART OF BURGUNDY – WITH FOCUS ON THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS WHITE WINE APPELLATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

1.1 Introduction

The winegrowers in Pouilly-Fuissé have for a long period discussed and prepared a premier cru classification of the appellation Pouilly-Fuissé in cooperation with the national institute in France (INAO¹). In this regard, Pouilly-Fuissé is firstmover² and perhaps the most prestigious and well-known white wine appellation in the Mâconnais.

The appellation Pouilly-Fuissé will in the near future obtain an official premier cru classification of their vineyards. The wine magazine, Bourgogne Aujourd'hui published the 29th of September 2017 the following statement (in French): *"Les vignerons ont voté et plus rien s'oppose à ce que Pouilly-Fuissé obtienne ses premiers crus, en 2019 à coup sûr et peut-être même dès le millésime 2018"*

This means that the winegrowers have voted positively for a classification of the Pouilly-Fuissé wines, perhaps already effective from beginning of year 2018 but surely from 2019.

1.2 Objective

Not so many years ago, the region was perhaps more known for large quantities of mass-produced wines³, wines to be drunk early. Today a new generation of winemakers have emerged and the quality is certainly improving.

Compared to their more prestigious counterparts in Côte de Beaune, like appellation Meursault, Chassagne-Montrachet or Puligny-Montrachet, the wines from Mâconnais are still moderately priced and not as highly regarded. *But is the difference fair and justified?* In order to answer this question it will be necessary to take a closer look at the following factors:

- A short overview of the Mâconnais – the geography and the size of the different appellations
- Why is the Mâconnais the only region in Burgundy without premier crus – seen from a historical perspective
- The different styles of the Mâconnais white wines - do they differ that much from the white wines from Côte de Beaune?
- Describe differences in climate, weather, topography, varieties, soils, viticulture, vinification, scale of production, legislation compared to Côte de Beaune
- How is the consumer's perception of for example a bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé compared to a bottle white of Meursault, Chassagne-Montrachet or Puligny-Montrachet?
- How is the price level of the best white wines from the Mâconnais compared to the white wines from Côte de Beaune.
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Today improvements have taken place in the Mâconnais and the region stands out as a dynamic winegrowing region in Burgundy. But the final questions (and speculation) is how *will an introduction of a classification of 1st growth help to promote/improve the wines from Pouilly-Fuissé, Pouilly-Loché etc.:*

- How is the new classification made and what is the result – so far?
- Will the winemakers be obliged to follow stricter rules and/or strive to make even better wines by imposing self-regulated initiatives?
- Will a classification including 1st growth trigger a higher demand and perceived value to the consumer?
- How will the quality and the market for white wines evolve in the Mâconnais in the next 5 years?

¹ INAO (Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité)

² Other appellations are about to follow Pouilly-Fuissé in the introduction of specific classification systems – not unlike their counterparts in the Côte d'Or.

³ see Morris, Jasper, Inside Burgundy, 2010, page 582.

- And will this in the end justify higher prices - compared to the more expensive white wines from Côte de Beaune?

1.3. Selection

The next pages will only focus on the white wines from the Mâconnais (variety = 100 % Chardonnay) in the following order: Pouilly-Fuissé (focus will be on this AOC, due to the limited scope of this paper), Pouilly-Loché, Pouilly-Vinzelles, Viré-Clessé, Saint-Véran and Mâcon, Mâcon-Villages, Mâcon-Villages + village name.

4. CONCLUSION – summary

4.1 Conclusion and personal commentary

The Mâconnais consist of 5 village appellations (1/3 of the area) and a large and scattered regional Mâcon/Mâcon-Village appellation (2/3 of the area). The winegrowers in the Mâconnais never agreed about a classification system due to several reasons (trade structure and World War II).

The style of the wines from the Mâconnais is comparable to the wines from the Côte de Beaune – all based on chardonnay. But generally the Mâconnais is warmer and produces wines with riper fruit and more body. The viticulture and winemaking is traditional - not unlike the white wines from Côte de Beaune.

The price/quality relationship is very good in the Mâconnais - the best wines from Pouilly-Fuissé and the neighbouring appellations can in my opinion easily compete with the Côte de Beaune white wines.

The soils of Jurassic origin in the Côte de Beaune continue down to Beaujolais and also include the Mâconnais. The proposed premier crus in AOC Pouilly-Fuissé are more or less based on south- and east facing slopes on limestone, marl and clay. The soils and the expositions in the Mâconnais are more varied compared to Côte de Beaune.

The best wines from the Pouilly-Fuissé have always been highly regarded even in comparison with a Meursault or a Chassagne-Montrachet, but the price level is much lower (40-50 %). In my opinion, wine buyers will find some very good and affordable chardonnay in the Mâconnais in these days, where the price level in Côte de Beaune has reached a super premium level.

The new 1er cru classification includes nearly all of the best performing vineyards in the Pouilly-Fuissé appellation - selected in cooperation with the INAO by several criteria like: Past performance, soils, exposition, altitude etc.

The quality and price level are expected to increase due to stricter legislation and better performance by more and more estate bottling wineries in contrast to earlier days with mass-produced *négociants* wines.

The export figures show that white Burgundy and white Mâconnais is still very important in the USA market but growing in the European countries (both value and volume).

In my opinion the Mâconnais has a lot to offer, the Pouilly-Fuissé has a diversity of soils and expositions (warm and cool sites), which can be an advantage in a time with climate change.

I think that the introduction of a classification system in Pouilly-Fuissé will trigger higher demand and prices. The new 1er cru classification in Pouilly-Fuissé is expected to be effective this year or next year. The other village appellations⁴ will soon follow and within the next 5 years, they will probably also have their own classification. ***So my best guess is that, The Mâconnais as a whole has a bright future and that we will see increased demand and higher prices over the next 5 years.***

⁴ Pouilly-Lôché, Pouilly-Vinzelles, Viré-Clessé and Saint-Véran.