Champagne Joël Falmet

The Domaine at-a-glance

Owner/Winemaker: Joël Falmet
Soil: Kimmeridgian Soil **Year Est:** 1990s
Size: 6.5 Ha **Location:** Rouvre-les-Vignes
Appellations Produced: Champagne (Aube)

80% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay

Joël Falmet's vineyards are located in the Aube (Bar-Sur-Aube) within the Côtes des Bar region of Champagne. The domaine consists of a small family vineyard of only 6.5 hectares (approx. 15.5 acres) with a total annual production around 2000 cases. The domaine has been passed down through the family for several generations. Joël took over the family domaine in the early 1990s. Joël, along with the help of his brother Yves (now a producer in Saint-Chinian), was the first in the family to produce an estate bottled wine. Today they produce about 1200 cases of "Brut Tradition" and an additional 400 cases of a "Grand Reserve" from some of their older vines. The style is clean, straightforward, and full bodied, which is typical of a Champagne from the Aube that is made primarily from Pinot Noir. Joël also makes a small amount of rosé, about 160 cases per year. Joël's rosé is made by adding aproximately 10% still red wine (100% Pinot Noir) to the blend. Dosage for the rosé is 12 grams per liter.

About the Côtes des Bar

The Côtes des Bar has always been one of the more controversial regions of Champagne. The Côtes des Bar is more than 70 miles southeast from the center of Champagne, the Marne, which surrounds the towns of Reims and Epernay. The sub-region of Bar-Sur-Aube gets its name from the Aube river that runs through the region. The Aube river is responsible for creating the hillsides where Champagne vineyards now grow. Over the millennia the river cut its way through a thick layer of limestone exposing large channels of Kimmeridgian soil which now forms the hillsides of the Côtes des Bar. Originally considered part of Champagne, the vineyards were removed from the commercial classification of champagne in 1911. After riots broke out, a concession was made in mid 1911 to classify the vineyards of the Côtes des Bar as a "Champagne 2ème Zone". Essentially, this reclassification called the wines a second class Champagne. In addition to battling the reclassification, the winemakers of the Côtes des Bar had just suffered their way through phylloxera, and would soon have their vineyards ravaged by World War I. It wouldn't be until 1927 that the Côtes des Bar was reclassified as A.O.C. Champagne. The arguments made by the winemakers of the Marne, to exclude the Côtes des Bar from the official Champagne district were, in some ways, justified. The soil in the Côtes des Bar is very different from that of the Marne. In the Côtes des Bar the soil is primarily Upper Kimmeridgian, the same soil that is found in Chablis, while the soil in the Marne is light "Champanian" chalk. In fact, the Côtes des Bar is geographically and geologically much closer to Chablis than it is to the Marne. The Côtes des Bar generally produces richer, fuller-bodied wines than the Marne, partially because it is further south and therefore slightly warmer. In addition, the Kimmeridgian soil of the Côtes des Bar tends to produce richer wines than the light, fine chalk soil, found around Epernay. Though many of the "Grand Marque" Champagne houses still look down upon the vineyards of the Côtes des Bar, they also generally use grapes from this region to add body and richness to their own wines. To this day, there are very few estate bottled Champagnes in the Côtes des Bar. Most of the wine is sold to cooperatives or the large Champagne houses for blending.