



Wine moves

Dominique Giroud is the epitome of a modern Swiss winemaker. He is obsessed about tradition, modernization and perfection, traits possessed by many Swiss – watchmakers, chocolatiers, bankers and of course, winemakers.

Terroir is a word often used in describing Giroud Vins' USP (Unique Selling Proposition). Like many winemakers around the world, Dominique knows the importance of terroir – the unique blend of conditions that affect grape quality, such as the weather during the growing season, soil minerals and acidity, time of harvest, and pruning method. The quality of the grapes determines the quality of the wine produced, and winemakers go to great lengths to ensure the vines used are suited to the terroir.

When Dominique established Giroud Vins in 1993, he owned only three hectares of vineyards in Valais, the largest wine-producing region in Switzerland. Now he owns 56 hectares, and his father François oversees the land production aspect of the business, paying particular attention to the best match between grape varieties and the terroir, the development of biodynamic growing methods and maintaining soil harmony with nature.

Winemaking, or vinification, flows in Dominique's veins. The Giroud family has been in the wine production business for four generations. When he was four years old, his grandfather gave him his



first taste of vino, which did not appeal to his young palate. Growing up on a vineyard and helping to weed the rows of vines boosted young Dominique's interest in the land, the vines, and of course, the beautiful wines made from these gifts of nature. He then went on to study the wine business and started Giroud Vins at a tender age of 21.

The Valais region has 26 centuries of wine producing history. Before the arrival of the Romans, as early as 600 B.C., Helvetian tribes cultivated *Vitis* vine stock above Sion, near Lake Montorge. Trade flourished between the region and northern Italy, which introduced a number of varietals from Aosta Valley into the upper Rhone valley, where the vines thrived. Today, Valais is the only region that continues to cultivate these 'indigenous' varietals that include la Petite Arvine, l'Amigne, l'Humagne Blanche, l'Humagne Rouge, le Cornalin and la Rèze.

Paying homage to history, Giroud Vins carries on the tradition by growing these indigenous varietals using old vines, which are translated into beautifully composed and award-winning wines.

"We have more potential to have a big aromatic



wine with our local indigenous grapes... we know that we produce better wine with old vines. If we want to produce wine that you can keep in your cellar for a little while, for that we need old vines," said Dominique.

During the wintertime, after the grapes are harvested, Dominique spends each morning, every week, six days a week, in the Giroud cellars with his winemaker. Not a drop passes through without the agreement of both Dominique and his winemaker. They ensure that each batch of wine is of exceptional quality, including the super premium lines of Arabesque, Constellation, and Danse Des Étoiles, which are aptly named to describe the graceful way the wine dances and moves on the palate.

A lot of emphasis was put into the Giroud Vins cellar, where everything is state-of-the-art, with the latest technology in temperature and fermentation control.

To highlight how the region and the new generation of winemakers such as Dominique are embracing modern wine production methods, Giroud Vins also built a modern integrated wine tourism

complex, incorporating a cellar, a wine shop that retails over 200 types of wines from the region and around the world, and a conference centre where daily wine appreciation workshops are held as part of their cellar tours.

For a wine-producing region with such a long-standing tradition, it seems rather strange that very few people are aware that Switzerland makes wine. According to Dominique, the Swiss consume more wine than they produce.

"We have a strong indigenous market, we import quite a lot of wines. With that, our ancestors didn't find a need to go into the international market. Because of that, we never concentrated on export," he explained.

He is however trying to change this. With his Wine Universe concept to bring Swiss wine to the rest of the world, Giroud Vins are now exported to London, Stockholm, The Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Iceland, Ireland, Canada, and Singapore.

Giroud Vins can be found at Oenotheque by Wine Universe, #01-109, Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Boulevard.

V. Giroud Vins selection:



Amigne De Vetroz

Popular tradition has it that Roman legionnaires brought the Amigne vine to the Valais region, but modern research is unable to trace the origin of this grape variety. The grapes selected by Dominique Giroud are from ancient Abbaye de Vétroz vines that are over 40 years old, with restricted yield.

Colour: Golden yellow

Nose: Characterised by touches of citrus, figs and linden

Taste: Citrus fruit with honey and vanilla scents



Petite Arvine De Chamoson

Petite Arvine originated from the Aosta Valley and it is now only grown in the Valais region. It is made from small-yield wine stock grown on the alluvial cone of Chamoson.

Colour: Yellow with green apple shades

Nose: Characterised by touches of white peach, lemon, grapefruit and rhubarb

Taste: Fruity with lemon, white peach and grapefruit scents



Cornalin De Chamoson

Once called 'Rouge du Pays' (Country Red), Cornalin is difficult to grow and produces low yields. The last two decades saw a revival of this wine and it is now a symbol of Switzerland's Valais region.

Colour: Ruby tinted with violet shades

Nose: Characterised by notes of black cherry, blueberry and cloves

Taste: Spicy aromas balanced by silky tannins



Arabesque

Dominique Giroud carefully selects the grapes for this Syrah, Cabernet-Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir blend from extremely small yield vine stock. The wine is aged in wooden barrels for one year to produce this premium blend.

Colour: Deep red

Nose: Characterised by notes of cocoa and spices with subtle vanilla

Taste: Rich and full-bodied with spicy aromas and magnificent tannins with a long finish containing woody hints