

MICHEL
FONNÉ
Vigneron-récoltant

Domaine Michel Fonné





One estate, one family

Our story begins in 1747, with a visionary ancestor who decided to invest in a small piece of land to grow vines. It was with deep fascination and curiosity that he embarked on this adventure, carefully harvesting the fruit of the vine, the grape. This passion has been passed down from generation to generation. Seven generations later, the estate cultivates 18 hectares of vines spread over 10 communes and more than a hundred plots. Michel Fonné is currently in charge of the estate, which he took over in 1989 from his uncle René Barth, a vine grower and harvester, and added to the land of his parents, who were also vine growers.

A graduate oenologist from Dijon, Michel acquired his expertise in Champagne winemaking at Damery before traveling to California to make a vintage. These travels and experiences, discovering new methods, techniques and ancestral know-how, allowed him to return to the estate with renewed energy and bold ideas for creating wines that combine tradition and modernity.

For Michel, winemaking is much more than a job; it's a vocation, a way of living in harmony with nature and passing on a piece of his soul through each cuvée. Ambitious and curious, he has also worked to introduce the estate's wines to new markets. Thanks to his perseverance and extensive travels, the Domaine is now present in about thirty countries around the world.



The new generation

Driven by a passion for working with vines and wine, Michel has passed this passion on to his three daughters, Déborah, Sarah and Salomé. From a young age, they were immersed in this world, learning to recognize soil types, grape varieties and the magic of transforming fruit into wine. Michel passed on his knowledge with patience and enthusiasm, instilling in them not only the essential technical gestures, but also a profound vision of wine as a reflection of ancestral know-how.

Over the years, his three daughters have taken their place at his side, each bringing her own unique perspective and sensibility, while respecting the foundations he passed on to them. Together, they have learned to honor the history of the estate while integrating new practices to adapt production to today's challenges.

Today, the daughters, in turn, carry on this passion, spreading it around the world with pride and respect. The work of the two generations is carried out in a spirit of sharing, complicity and love for the terroir.



A place, a history

Domaine Michel Fonné is located in Bennwihr, a village in the heart of the Alsatian vineyards, along the Alsatian Wine Route, between Kaysersberg and Ribeauvillé. Records of the village date back to 777 A.D. under the name of Bebonisvillare. But its origins go back even further, to Roman times, with the construction of the Roman road that is still visible today.

Alsace, a region shared for centuries between France and Germany, has a complex history and a bicultural heritage: from the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne to the conquest by Louis XIV, to the annexation to Germany after the Treaty of Frankfurt. At the end of the Second World War, Alsace was the scene of fierce fighting. On December 24, 1944, Bennwihr was liberated by the Americans, but was left in a state of ruin.

Today, Germanic traditions and culture remain deeply rooted in the region: the Alsatian dialect, close to German, village names and gastronomy. It was after the war that Michel's uncle, René Barth, planted the first Pinot Noir vines in Bennwihr, straight from Burgundy. This grape variety is now grown alongside the six white varieties typical of Alsace.

Work in the vineyard

Work on the vines is carried out throughout the year, starting as soon as the leaves fall after the harvest. The double Guyot pruning, carried out while the vines are dormant, leaves two canes on each stock that will bear the following year's harvest. These canes are then tied in an arch, a step that favors uniform bud development.

In April, as temperatures rise, the vine slowly begins to awaken. The buds swell, revealing leaves and the first outlines of future bunches. This is when the green harvesting begins: disbudding, to remove unwanted buds, and bud pruning, to remove the "gourmands", the shoots that emerge from the stock or rootstock.

During this period, the vine grows rapidly. It is then necessary to braid the vegetation through the wires to prevent branches from falling off, and manual trellising also helps to aerate the foliage.

The soil has been cultivated mechanically for the last ten years. Every second row is naturally grassed, allowing spontaneous flora to develop. This diverse plant cover, specific to each plot, plays a crucial role in water retention.

Throughout the summer, the grapes grow until they reach their final size. This is when the ripening process begins: the grapes, initially green, change color (purple for Pinot Gris, pink for Gewurztraminer, yellow for Riesling). The sugar content of the grapes increases while the acidity decreases. Only when the perfect balance between sugars, acids, aromas and tannins has been achieved do we decide to harvest the grapes.

Respect for the environment has been at the heart of the winery's development for several years. Since the 2022 vintage, we have been certified in Organic Agriculture (AB), after having been certified by Terra Vitis in previous years.



Organic farming certification

Organic farming at the winery reflects a deep commitment to nature and the environment. Several years ago, Déborah initiated this change by adopting practices that respect the ecosystem. One of the main characteristics of organic farming is the absence of synthetic chemicals such as pesticides and industrial fertilizers. Instead, natural methods are used to protect the vines and promote their growth. Soil management is adapted to preserve its structure and encourage the microbial life essential to the health of the vines. Natural grass cover, the use of organic compost, and the cultivation of cover crops are favored to maintain fertility and limit erosion.

This approach extends to winemaking, where very few chemicals are added and natural yeasts are favored for fermentation. The goal is to produce wines that fully reflect their terroir, while respecting biodiversity and the environment. Organic certification is not just a label, but a sincere commitment to offer authentic, unique wines, born from the synergy between nature and the winemaker's know-how. All while preserving the soil and ecosystems.



Our terroirs

Situated at the foot of the Vosges Mountains, the vineyards of Alsace cover a mosaic of terroirs, each of which lends a unique flavor to the grape varieties grown there. The region's unique climate is directly linked to its geographic location: the Black Forest to the east and the Vosges to the west. The landscape is made up of a succession of hills at altitudes between 200 and 400 meters. The natural barrier of the Vosges plays a key role in protecting the vineyards and contributes to the special climate that characterizes Alsace.

Our Single Vineyards

The Rebgarten is a small vineyard located in the commune of Bennwihr, mainly composed of granitic sand. The vines face south, which gives them optimal exposure to the sun. This terroir is planted exclusively with Riesling, a grape that perfectly expresses the mineral dimension of this soil.

The Colline des Romains, or Roemerberg, is also located in the commune of Bennwihr. Exposed to the east and south-east, its clay-limestone soil is particularly suitable for Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris.

Finally, the Vogelgarten, high above Sigolsheim, is a sandstone-limestone terroir. Facing south, this site benefits from optimal sunshine, which is reflected in the roundness of our Gewurztraminer wines.



Our Grands Crus

Since 1975, Alsace has counted fifty-one Grands Crus, each one characterized by a privileged terroir, a unique geology, a specific climate and a particular exposure, which create a perfect harmony. The Domaine is fortunate to have plots on five of these exceptional terroirs. These Grands Crus allow the estate to produce wines of the highest quality, reflecting the diversity and richness of the Alsatian terroir.

The **Mambourg** Grand Cru, located on the heights of Sigolsheim and facing south, covers 61.85 hectares. This terroir benefits from optimal sunshine and calcareous-magnesian soils. The wines of Mambourg are particularly distinctive, with good concentration, pronounced roundness and exceptional aging potential.

The Grand Cru **Mandelberg**, also known as the Colline des Amandiers, protects the village of Mittelwihr from the north winds. This 22-hectare terroir, facing south and southwest, lies on marly limestone soils. The presence of almond trees, which are rare at this latitude, testifies to the exceptional climate of the region. The wines produced here are intense and fruity with great finesse.



The Grand Cru **Marckrain**, on the heights of the village of Bennwihr, extends over 53.35 hectares along the Route des Vins. Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris are the main grape varieties planted here, benefiting from the eastern and southeastern exposures on marly limestone soils. Wines from this terroir combine a characteristic acidity with a beautiful aromatic richness.

The **Schlossberg** Grand Cru is located on the heights of Kientzheim, at an altitude of 200-300 meters. With its steep slopes, this terroir requires terraced cultivation. The exposure is south and the soil is granitic. Most of the 80.28 hectares are planted with Riesling. Wines from this acidic terroir are always expressive in their youth.

The Grand Cru **Sonnenglanz**, located in the hills above the village of Beblenheim at an altitude of 250 meters, covers 32.80 hectares. The limestone soils of this terroir ensure excellent water retention and fertilization, as well as efficient drainage of rainwater. These ideal conditions promote optimal ripening of the grapes.



The art of winemaking

White wines

The grapes are harvested when we consider that they have reached optimal ripeness, i.e. when the balance between sugar and acidity is perfect and when the aromas are concentrated, especially in the case of aromatic varieties. The harvest is carried out by hand, with particular care in the sorting of the grapes. After the harvest, the grapes are stored in containers until they arrive at the winery, where they are taken to the press.

For several years now, we have been using a pneumatic membrane press that extracts the juice very gently, at low pressure and over a cycle of several hours. Throughout the pressing process, the must is regularly pumped and transferred to our stainless steel tanks at a low temperature (around 10°C). After 48 hours, we proceed to the *débourbage* (settling of the must), a stage that consists in removing the largest residues and sediments.

This is when the yeasts naturally present on the grapes begin to break down the sugars and convert them into alcohol, marking the beginning of alcoholic fermentation. This crucial stage in the winemaking process can last from a few days for some wines to several months for others, depending on the vat, plot and grape variety.

Some white wines may also undergo natural, spontaneous malolactic fermentation. This conversion of malic acid to lactic acid reduces the acidity of the wine and gives it greater roundness.



Once fermentation is complete, we proceed to racking, an operation designed to eliminate fermentation residues such as dead yeast. This is followed by sulphiting to protect the wine.

Aging then begins. For several months, the fine particles suspended in the wine slowly settle to the bottom of the vat, forming the lees. It is during this period that the character, color and expression of the wine fully develop. Our Grands Crus and Vendanges Tardives are aged in wooden barrels.

Before bottling, the wines are stabilized and clarified by filtration to eliminate lees and impurities. A final analysis is carried out to verify the analytical characteristics of the wine.

Once all these stages have been completed, the wine is ready to be bottled!

A few words on the sweetness of wines:

A dry wine with less than 4 g/L of residual sugar has completed fermentation, meaning that all the sugars have been converted into alcohol. On the other hand, a semi-dry, semi-sweet or sweet wine that still contains residual sugar has not completed fermentation, either naturally or intentionally.

Red Wines

The vinification of Pinot Noir begins as soon as the grapes are harvested. Unlike white varieties, the grapes are not pressed immediately upon arrival at the winery. Prior maceration is necessary to extract the color from the skins (Pinot Noir juice is white and takes on its color only when it comes into contact with the skins), as well as other compounds present in the berries.

The grapes are first crushed (to release the juice by perforating the berries) and partially destemmed (to remove the stems from the bunch). These two stages have specific objectives:

- Destemming improves tannin extraction and enhances the color intensity of the must.
- Crushing facilitates maceration and improves contact between juice and solids.

Maceration takes place at the same time as alcoholic fermentation, generally for fourteen days, the length of which is adjusted according to tasting and analysis. At the end of this phase, the wine is pressed and malolactic fermentation begins.

After fermentation, the wine is racked to remove residues, especially dead yeast, and then sulfited to protect the wine.

Aging then begins, during which the fine particles in suspension slowly settle to the bottom of the vat, forming the lees. It is during this period that the wine develops its character, color and expression.

Before bottling, the wines are stabilized and clarified by filtration, which removes lees and impurities. A final analysis is carried out to verify the analytical characteristics of the wine.

Once all these stages have been completed, the wine is ready to be bottled.



Crémants

Crémant, a sparkling wine made by the traditional method, is distinguished from a white wine as soon as it is bottled. At this point, a mixture of yeast and sugar, known as *liqueur de tirage*, is added to the wine.

These two elements are responsible for the formation of carbon dioxide in the bottle, a phenomenon known as "*prise de mousse*". This second alcoholic fermentation takes place in the bottle: the yeasts consume the sugars, producing carbon dioxide and ethanol. The hermetically sealed bottles are then stored horizontally, "*on laths*", for at least 12 months. The longer the wine remains in contact with the yeasts, the more complex, subtle and refined its aromas become.

At the end of this aging period, before being marketed, it is necessary to remove the yeast that forms a deposit in the bottle. In a careful process, the bottles are moved from a horizontal to a vertical position, known as "*sur pointe*", so that the deposit is concentrated in the neck. The neck is then immersed in a freezing tray to form an ice cube. The bottles are returned to their upright position, uncorked and freed from the yeast trapped in the ice cube.

The wine is then adjusted with *liqueur d'expédition*, a subtle blend of sugar and wine that is the winemaker's signature. Finally, the bottle is corked and muzzled to maintain pressure and prevent the cork from popping.

Our range of products

A veritable mosaic, the seven grape varieties of Alsace offer a range of tastes from the driest and lightest to the most opulent and full-bodied. This diversity makes for a perfect marriage between Alsace wines and cuisines from all over the world. At the Domaine, these grape varieties come to life on a variety of terroirs, in several ranges: Tradition, Lieux-dits, Grands Crus, Vendanges Tardives and Sélections de Grains Nobles.

Our Crémants

Crémants, sparkling wines made using traditional methods, are highly prized as aperitifs. We offer three Crémants, each unique in its composition, aging and aromas.

Our Crémant d'Alsace Brut is a blend of 30% Pinot Noir and 70% Pinot Blanc, aged on the lees for a minimum of 12 months. The Crémant Rosé is made exclusively from Pinot Noir (100%) and is vinified as a rosé thanks to pellicular maceration, a technique used to extract color from the skins in the press, before being aged on the lees for 24 months. Finally, Crémant Premium, also made from 100% Pinot Noir, is vinified as a white wine and aged on the lees for at least 36 months to give it an even more complex profile.

Our Classic Range

The Tradition range presents dry gourmet wines that highlight the purity of the grape variety. The grapes come from our carefully selected plots, based on a rigorous demarcation of historical production areas. We also offer a blend of several grape varieties, Grains de Génie or Edelzwicker, to offer a harmonious, complex experience.



Our Single Vineyards

This range highlights the unique character of the terroir. The wines from these vineyards reveal a multitude of nuances. The vines, over 65 years old, produce rich, complex and round wines.

Our Grands Crus

The Grand Cru range embodies a refined, gourmet art de vivre for connoisseurs of fine wine. Geological and climatic conditions, as well as strict production requirements, make these wines unique, fine and complex, often suitable for aging. These authentic wines reveal their terroir through rich aromas and distinctive structure. The grape varieties grown are Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer.

Our Late Harvest

Late Harvest and Noble Rot from our Grands Crus vineyards, thanks to their ideal exposure and their ability to produce highly concentrated wines. These grapes are harvested a few weeks after the conventional harvest and present berries with an exceptional concentration of aromas and sugars. This process mutes the expression of the grape variety in favor of remarkable power, complexity and length on the palate. These wines are true masterpieces.



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