The world of wine has inseparable terroir/grape couples whose partnerships have been proven by their time-honoured love stories. In these marriages, the grape variety reveals the terroir. It forms such a strong bond with the terroir that it virtually melds into it, to the point where it often loses its own name and takes on that of the terroir. Thus we speak, for example, of a Barolo or a Pomerol or a Sançerre without noting the name of the grapes associated with these wines. The names are known to knowledgeable wine-lovers, but most fans of these wines are unaware of them.

Dézaley and Chasselas form one of these legendary couples. Their steadfast faithfulness to each other has so endured that it is impossible to imagine one without the other. It’s well known that several grape varieties are capable of adapting to a terroir, but those that can reveal the true typicity of a terroir are rare. In the case of Chasselas, the wines of Dézaley can always be distinguished from other Chasselas wines, particularly several months or years after they are bottled.

How is it possible to know that a grape variety can truly reveal a terroir? Three conditions must be fulfilled, I believe:
- historically confirmed
- typicity present no matter what vintage
- aging potential.

For Dézaley, these three criteria are met, beyond any doubt. Chasselas has been part of Dézaley since the first terraces were made by the Cistercian monks. For 800 years Dézaley wines have been the leader of Chasselas wines. The second condition is also easily fulfilled. A Dézaley is readily recognized when compared to other Chasselas wines, thanks to its typicity, no matter what the weather conditions in a given year. And finally, the ability of a Dézaley to age well is widely recognized. Anyone who has had the chance to taste Dézaley wines from exceptional vintages – for example 1945, 1947, 1971 or, closer to our time, 2000, has no doubts about the remarkable aging potential of Chasselas from the Dézaley terroir.

The value of terroirs has been empirically affirmed over time. Scientific studies have recently been carried out to try to identify the parameters that would explain the quality of a terroir. The analysis is extremely complex. One criterion, taken on its own, is not enough to explain the value of a terroir. Several parameters, linked to soil, climate and topography must be brought together.

A study of canton Vaud’s wine terroirs, which has just been completed, shows that its vineyard soils were made by the Rhone glacier that retreated only 12,000 years ago. More than 60% of vineyard soil comes directly from glacial deposits that more or less covered the bedrock. But Dézaley had fewer moraine deposits, with the glacier blocked by the Rivaz shoulder. The great majority of Dézaley
soils came from the mother rock (sandstone-marl molasse), formed 20 to 30 million years ago. This has certainly played a key role in the typicity of wines. Thanks to the built terraces the soils generally have a good ability to retain water. Soil water regime appears to be a key factor contributing to the quality of a terroir. Soil is nevertheless not the only parameter that explains the Dézaley terroir. Topography, a microclimate that is influenced by the walls, the lake and particular winds all add their touch to make Dézaley an exceptional terroir for the Chasselas grape.

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