



CHEVALIER

LA LOIRE

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# La Loire

The defining feature of the Loire Valley, not surprisingly, is the Loire River. The longest river in France, spanning more than 600 miles, it connects seemingly disparate wine regions. Why else would Sancerre, with its Kimmeridgian limestone terroir and continental climate, be connected to Muscadet, an appellation that is 250 miles away on the Atlantic coast?

The river plays a crucial role in moderating temperatures, allowing viticulture to thrive in this cool, northerly climate. Correspondingly, its wines share a common thread of fresh acidity, but in every other way, diversity abounds in the Loire Valley. The aforementioned Kimmeridgian limestone of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, also found in Chablis, puts a unique mark on Sauvignon Blanc that differentiates it from other examples locally and worldwide. Chinon, Bourgueil, and Saumur boast the presence of *tuffeau*, a type of yellowish chalky limestone unique to the Loire. Quarried for centuries to build the region's famous châteaux, it also represents a prized vineyard soil and is the perfect medium for excavating the cool, humid cellars ideal for aging wine. Schist is prevalent in parts of Anjou, while the Muscadet zone has a range of soils derived from igneous and metamorphic rock.

In addition to the region's geologic diversity, many grape varieties are cultivated here: Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc, Chenin Blanc, and Melon de Bourgogne are most common, but others including Pinot Gris, Grolleau, Pinot Noir, Pineau d'Aunis, Côt, Gamay, and Folle Blanche also thrive. This endless combination of grape, soil, and microclimate allows for the production of high-quality wines in all styles: white, red, rosé, sparkling, and dessert.

Some of our first imports came from the Loire, including the wines of Charles Joguet and Domaine Brégeon, while others such as Domaine Roger Neveu and Thierry Germain represent more recent collaborations. Through their creations, you will experience the Loire's many virtues in the form of refreshing, versatile wines that provide excellent value. The region's rural charm abounds in these bottles, offering the very best of the region known as *le Jardin de la France*.

—ANTHONY LYNCH



ABOVE: The town of Saumur. © ANTHONY LYNCH

FRONT COVER: Vineyards in Anjou overlooking the Loire. © GAIL SKOFF

## 2015 MUSCADET SÈVRE ET MAINE GORGES

◆ DOMAINE BRÉGEON \$43



THIS BOTTLING REPRESENTS the realization of Michel Brégeon's lifelong dream to elevate the wine of Muscadet to a loftier status than a simple oyster sipper. He was blessed with the appellation's greatest terroir, the igneous oceanic crust bedrock known as gabbro, and he has consistently observed the remarkable aging potential in his wines that rivals the very best whites from France. Now, finally, as sub-appellations are being created to valorize Muscadet's best terroirs—in this case, Gorges—Michel's successor, Fred Lailier, is able to sell a tiny proportion of

his production in the best years at its true worth. This surprisingly powerful, complex wine can be decanted and enjoyed now with refined seafood dishes, or aged for ten more years for a truly exceptional Melon de Bourgogne experience.

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## 2018 SANCERRE "PIERRE FRANÇOIS XAVIER VIEILLES VIGNES"

◆ DOMAINE ROGER NEVEU \$35

ASSEMBLED IN GREAT YEARS from the Neveu family's best parcels around Verdigny, Chavignol, and Sancerre, "PFX"—as it is affectionately known by the family—is raised in oak rather than stainless steel, a nod to the historical norm in Sancerre. The three principal terroirs of Sancerre are incorporated: *terres blanches*, *silex*, and *caillottes*.

Caillottes are the small, sharp limestone rocks that litter the surface of many Sancerre vineyards, including the Neveu family's largest vineyard, Les Embouffants. The oak adds a grain and level of class and backbone that raise this cuvée several steps above the domaine's already delicious benchmark Sancerre bottling. PFX ages more slowly and gracefully than most Sancerres, and it makes a great cellar diversification play.





## 2018 SAUMUR *BLANC* “L’INSOLITE”

◆ THIERRY GERMAIN \$45

FROM ANCIENT VINES planted in yellow silex, l’Insolite is a sleek, spirited Chenin, bursting with energy and coated with just the right amount of luscious flesh. If it were Burgundy, you might call it Puligny-esque. The Saumur appellation has a noble history of producing age-worthy white wine of pedigree, and Thierry Germain is a master of these gorgeous terroirs that overlook the Loire. A pioneer of biodynamic farming, Thierry treats each vine like an individual; in the cellar, he raises his whites in enormous neutral *foudres*. Purity and precision abound in every cuvée to leave his cellar.



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## 2020 BOURGUEIL “AVIS DE VIN FORT”

◆ CATHERINE & PIERRE BRETON \$29

THIS WINE’S NAME is a reference to the maritime warning “Avis de Vent Fort”—a caution that strong winds are in the forecast—and an ironic nod to this pure Cabernet Franc’s lightness and utter drinkability. Not a *vin fort* by any means, this deep magenta juice lies somewhere between a rosé and a red, and should be treated accordingly: get it cool, gather a thirsty group, and quaff away. A country terrine on a warm, crusty baguette makes for an excellent match, but don’t hesitate to take it outside of its native habitat when considering possible pairings. It works just as well with stir-fry, *al pastor* tacos, or a greasy burger.





## 2018 SANCERRE ROUGE “LE CHANT DE L'ARCHET”

◆ DANIEL CHOTARD \$39

SANCERRE'S SLOPES were once covered with Pinot Noir, but today red wine makes up only a fraction of production in this esteemed appellation. The warming climate has been favorable to Pinot, allowing it to ripen well in most years and express greater power and complexity than once upon a time. Simon Chotard is no slouch when it comes to producing fine Sancerre rouge: he creates this special cuvée from the domaine's oldest vines, aging the wine in *demi-muids* and *foudres* to capture a delicate, yet assertively structured expression. Once a simple bistro wine, Sancerre rouge has become a legitimate—and affordable—alternative to Burgundy, with bottlings like this one suggesting that serious quality and value are to be found.



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## 2016 CHINON “CLOS DE LA DIOTERIE”

◆ CHARLES JOGUET \$70



CHARLES JOGUET once mused that he had gotten a lot of experience *drinking* good wine while studying art in Paris, but that was far from teaching him how to *make* good wine. On the long road of trial and error, he discovered a respect for patience over manipulation. “Finesse is the opposite of action,” he said in *La Revue du Vin de France*. “You have a terroir, a microclimate, and you do what you can with it.” Clos de la Dioterie is the essence of finesse: a harmony of ripe fruit aromas followed by silky spice on the palate; the freshness of a just-ripe blackberry and a trace of vanilla to soften its dense tannins. From the domaine's oldest vines, this is a monument of Cabernet Franc worthy of a place in every collector's cellar.





2015 Muscadet Sèvre et Maine Gorges <i>Domaine Brégeon</i>	Melon de Bourgogne	50-year-old vines Gabbro	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Quince, sea spray, white pepper, smoke Focused, bright, mineral, structured	Drink now through 2030
2018 Sancerre “Pierre François Xavier Vieilles Vignes” <i>Domaine Roger Neveu</i>	Sauvignon Blanc	40-year-old vines Clay, limestone, silex	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Ripe citrus, butter, stone fruit Generous, fleshy, flamboyant, demonstrative	Drink now through 2028
2018 Saumur Blanc “l’Insolite” <i>Thierry Germain</i>	Chenin Blanc	90-year-old vines Silex, clay, red limestone, sandstone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Pineapple, crushed stone, spring flowers, peach Racy, pulpy, sleek, flinty	Drink now through 2026
2020 Bourgueil “Avis de Vin Fort” <i>Catherine &amp; Pierre Breton</i>	Cabernet Franc	40- to 50-year-old vines Gravel, clay, limestone	Serve <i>cool</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Herbs, green pepper, flowers, cranberry Juicy, fresh, delicate, crunchy	Drink now
2018 Sancerre Rouge “Le Chant de l’Archet” <i>Daniel Chotard</i>	Pinot Noir	50-year-old vines Clay, limestone, Kimmeridgian marl	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 56–60° F Decant recommended	Ripe cherry, raspberry, black tea, turned earth Elegant, fine, medium-bodied	Drink now through 2030
2016 Chinon “Clos de la Dioterie” <i>Charles Joguet</i>	Cabernet Franc	Vines planted in 1930 to 1940 <i>Tuffeau</i> limestone, clay	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended	Licorice, mint, blackberry, graphite Dense, chalky, savory, concentrated	Drink now through 2035

far left top: Fred Lailler. © GAIL SKOFF

far left bottom: Two generations of Neveus in the cellar. © GAIL SKOFF

middle top: Thierry Germain. © GAIL SKOFF

middle bottom: Catherine, Paul, France, and Pierre Breton. © CATHERINE & PIERRE BRETON

near left top: Simon Chotard. © DIXON BROOKE

near left bottom: Kevin Fontaine, vigneron at Charles Joguet. © GAIL SKOFF

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# La Loire

## MUSCADET SÈVRE ET MAINE

- ♦ Cool oceanic climate with frequent rainfall
- ♦ Mix of igneous and metamorphic subsoils such as granite, gabbro, gneiss, and schist
- ♦ Extended lees aging provides richer texture and complexity
- ♦ Three *crus* have been identified (Gorges, Clisson, Le Pallet), and seven more are seeking recognition

## CHINON & BOURGUEIL

- ♦ Sunny climate with mix of oceanic and continental influences
- ♦ Bourgueil sits on the Loire's northern bank; Chinon is just south of the Loire, primarily along the banks of the Vienne
- ♦ Diversity of soils, from sand and gravel riverbanks to chalky *tuffeau* limestone hillsides
- ♦ Cabernet Franc styles range from light and fruity to powerful and age-worthy, depending on terroir and winemaking

## SANCERRE

- ♦ Temperate climate with continental influences
- ♦ Vineyards situated on rolling hills across fourteen communes on the left bank of the Loire
- ♦ Three principal soil types: *terres blanches* (Kimmeridgian marl), *silex* (flint), *caillottes* or *grèves* (pebbly Oxfordian limestone)
- ♦ Plantings consist of 80% Sauvignon Blanc and 20% Pinot Noir for red and rosé

## SAUMUR

- ♦ Temperate oceanic climate with slight continental influence
- ♦ Vineyards underlain by Cretaceous limestone with topsoils of clay, sand, and silex
- ♦ Principal grape varieties are Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc
- ♦ Local *tuffeau* chalk was long quarried for construction, leaving extensive cellars that provide ideal conditions for aging wine

