



# KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

## CHAMPALOU

Country: France

Region: Loire

Appellation(s): Vouvray

Producer: Catherine, Didier, & Céline

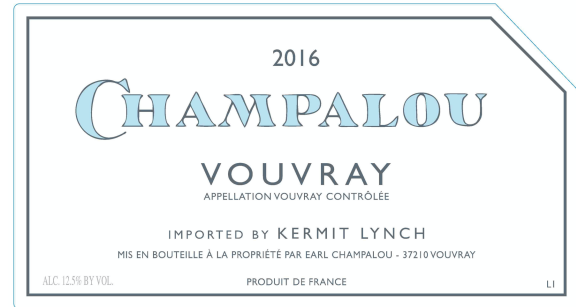
**Champalou**

Founded: 1984

Annual Production: 10,000 cases

Farming: Haute Valeur Environnementale  
(certified) Organic (practicing)

Website: [www.champalou.com](http://www.champalou.com)



Catherine and Didier Champalou both come from a long line of vignerons—Catherine represents the twelfth generation in her family to make wine in Vouvray, while Didier, from the Poitou region just to the south, marks the sixth generation of his family to dedicate his life to the vine. Upon completing viticultural school in Saumur, where they met, the couple decided to brave it on their own, starting with modest holdings in Vouvray. Since founding the domaine in 1983, they have not only grown their vineyard land, but their label has become one of the most highly-acclaimed in the appellation. Vouvray is home to the noble Chenin Blanc, more commonly known as Pineau de la Loire in their part of the world. Blessed with ideal soils and climate perfectly adapted to the Pineau, the Champalous are veritable Chenin specialists whose diverse cuvées show off Vouvray at its very finest.

In the Loire's Touraine region, Vouvray enjoys a warm, continental climate during the summers. Slowly dropping temperatures in autumn make for a long ripening season, while microclimates with high humidity can also bring about the beloved noble rot in some years. The soils of clay, rocky limestone, and silex (flint) sit atop the Loire's famous tuffeau bedrock, a chalky foundation that provides freshness and finesse to the wines. The Pineau of Vouvray can be pétillant (sparkling), sec (dry), demi-sec (off-dry), moelleux or liquoreux (sweeter styles either due to botrytis or concentration by sun and wind). The Champalous master all five styles.

The family now farms twenty-two hectares of Chenin Blanc. They have embraced sustainable viticulture from the start, while also integrating the use of the lunar calendar more typically associated with biodynamics. Cover crops between vineyard rows help with excess water absorption and encourage biodiversity, and they limit the number of tractor passages through the vines to reduce emissions and avoid compacting the soil. Soe land is always left to lie fallow for a period of seven years in a rotation that restores the soils before replanting. As the climate becomes less predictable and extreme events like drought and frost occur more frequently, the Champalous continue to think critically about how to sustainably adapt their viticulture.



# KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

## CHAMPALOU (continued)

The Champalous have real touch in the cellar, crafting wines of great elegance and tenderness. Their Vouvrais are highly aromatic with impeccable balance at all sweetness levels, still and sparkling. No one comes close to copying their distinct style.

Didier and Catherine's daughter, Céline, joined the domaine in 2006 after internships in New Zealand, South Africa, the Languedoc, Corsica, and Canada. Céline now runs the show at Champalou, with her parents always nearby to lend a hand when needed. There is no question that the tradition and quality for which this domaine is known will continue for many years to come.

| <u>Wine</u>                               | <u>Blend</u> | <u>Vine Age</u>  | <u>Soil Type</u> | <u>Vineyard Area*</u> |
|---|--------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Vouvray Brut Méthode Traditionelle</b> | Chenin Blanc | 20 years average | Clay, limestone  | 3.5 ha                |
| <b>Vouvray</b>                            | Chenin Blanc | 35 years average | Clay, limestone  | 13.5 ha               |
| <b>Vouvray <i>Le Portail</i></b>          | Chenin Blanc | 16 years         | Clay             | 1 ha                  |
| <b>Vouvray "Les Fondraux"</b>             |              |                  |                  |                       |
| <b>Vouvray "La Moelleuse"</b>             | Chenin Blanc | 45 years average | Clay, silex      | 4 ha total            |
| <b>Vouvray "Les Tries"</b>                |              |                  |                  |                       |

\* "ha"=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

## VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Certified Sustainable Farming by Terra Vitis. Will be certified Organic beginning with 2023 harvest
- All grapes harvested by hand
- Slow fermentation with indigenous yeasts only
- Malolactic fermentation occurs naturally depending on the vintage

### **Vouvray Brut "Méthode Traditionelle":**

The grapes for the Vouvray Brut are picked at maturity, and early in the morning to best respect the quality of the fruit. The must is then fermented in stainless steel and the wine is raised on fine lees before bottling. A second natural fermentation takes place once the wine is in bottle that gives its effervescence. The bottles are aged *sur lattes* for two years before disgorgement. After disgorgement the wines age for six to eight weeks. Dosage varies from vintage to vintage with a maximum residual sugar of about 3 grams. The Vouvray Brut "Méthode Traditionelle" is a blending of three different vintages per cuvée.



## KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

### CHAMPALOU (continued)

#### **Vouvray:**

Harvest occurs early in the morning and the fruit is then immediately pressed. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel *caves*. A low temperature is maintained while the wine is aged on fine lees in *cave* for eleven months until bottling in September.

#### **Vouvray *Le Portail*:**

The Portail is the parcel of vines located between the gate to the Champalou's property and their winery, on top of the caves that house the wines. Grapes are picked by hand and pressed immediately. The juice is then vinified in 500 L wooden barrels. After fermentation, the wine sits on its lees for eighteen months in barrel with regular stirring before bottling.

#### **Vouvray "Les Fondraux" :**

Like the Vouvray, harvest happens early in the morning for the Fondraux and the grapes are immediately pressed. The juice is then transferred into 500-L wooden barrels for a slow fermentation. The finished wine has approximately 20 g/L of residual sugar, depending on the vintage. Each year, the balance is determined by tasting. When the right balance is achieved, the wine is chilled to stop fermentation. The wine is aged in the same vessel on its lees for eleven months before bottling.

#### **Vouvray "La Moelleuse":**

Grapes are sorted by hand in order to best select botrytized berries and the ones with the largest concentration of sugar from raisining (*passerillage*). The level of botrytis in the grapes used to make this wine depends on the vintage. The 2015 vintage has 63 g/L of residual sugar.

#### **Vouvray "Les Tries":**

The fruit is sorted, grape by grape, to find the best and most concentrated grapes. Les Tries is only produced in years in which noble rot fully develops. In the last twenty years, only 5 vintages have been produced: 1996, 1997, 2003, 2009, and 2015.

### MISCELLANEA

*The Champalou's dry and off-dry Vouvrais have become among the most frequently seen on the American restaurant list, and no wonder, given both their phenomenal quality:price rapport and their style.*

David Schildknecht, *The Wine Advocate*