

TOUR DE FRANCE - LOIRE VALLEY



Wine #1: Domaine Arnaud Lambert Cremant Blanc NV

Variety: Chenin Blanc (90%) Chardonnay (10%)

Appellation: Brézé, Saumur

Wine Notes: The NV Arnaud Lambert Cremant Blanc is a blend of 90% Chenin Blanc and 10% Chardonnay grown in rich sandy loam/ limestone clay soils in the Saumur region of the Loire Midi, primarily from old vineyards in Brézé. These old vineyards are now some of the most sought after vineyards in the Loire valley for their intense minerality creating flavor-packed Chenin Blanc grapes. The laser like Chenin Blanc is rounded at the edges with the addition of the Chardonnay to soften the texture. After aging 24 months in the Méthode Traditionnelle on the lees, the wine receives a light 5g dosage. The Cremant Blanc has a gorgeous white gold color with a platinum rim filled with delicate, persistent mousse. Aromas of crisp apple, green pear, brioche, lemon verbena and wet crunchy mineral notes are a true treat for your sniffer. The palate is precise, vinous and lively with crisp fruits, dry and refreshingly clean. It makes for a great aperitif wine to celebrate ringing in the new year with, yet also an awesome partner to a hearty seafood platter of shellfish, oysters on the half shell or Dugeoness crab.

My Thoughts: Across France, when wines are made using the Champagne method they are referred to as Cremant. And they feature top grapes grown in the region. As we kickoff the evening we feature a sparkling Chenin Blanc to show off the top white grape of the Loire Valley.

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Wine #2: Domaine Arnaud Lambert Clos David 2021

Variety: Chenin Blanc

Appellation: Brézé, Saumur

Wine Notes: From a 1.3 ha north-east facing site planted in 1965 on light sandy soil over limestone. Vinified with indigenous yeast and vinified 50% in aged foudres and 50% in barrel (15% new) and aged on fine lees. Fine and discrete on the aromas yet a notable step up in complexity and depth. Very long and intense with great precision on the palate, not at all fat or soft this shows lively citric acid giving great length and shape to the palate. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

My Thoughts: We start with arguably one of the most versatile grapes on the planet - Chenin Blanc. Whether bone dry or lusciously rich and sweet, Chenin embraces its terroir and creates some of the most character intense white wines on shelves today. The good news and bad news is that no two bottlings are really the same. Comparing this bottle of wine to something out of Savienneres would be like comparing Pinot and Cabernet. But yet, it is the SAME GRAPE! Today, we see a lot of Sancerre as it is a bottling of a familiar-to-us grape of Sauv Blanc (more on that later) and because it is the epicenter of incredible Sauv Blanc growth in Loire. Meanwhile, it is all about knowing your geographies and cities to identify not only which ones produce Chenin Blanc but which ones produce the Chenins YOU prefer...

My Notes:

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Wine #3: Domaine Huet Le Haut Lieu Demi-Sec 2022

Variety: Chenin Blanc

Appellation: Vouvray, Touraine

Wine Notes: Domaine Huet Le Mont Demi-Sec undergoes temperature-controlled fermentation in large, old oak demi-muids as well as stainless steel vats. There is no encouragement of the malolactic fermentation, thus many Huet wines remain rich in malic acid, a character that brings an age-worthiness to the wines. This has the structure and bitter-edged minerality to carry its weight and ripeness, with beeswax and white tea notes that overlay crunchy orchard fruit and pink grapefruit with peppery spice notes woven in. A lot of savory detail and acidity makes this superbalanced and very food-friendly.

My Thoughts: A step in the RS direction, this is an opportunity to truly see where Chenin Blanc can go. Demi-sec means semi-dry or as we would probably assume we lean toward - semi-sweet. However this is not so much a sweet wine as it is more of a wine with character. The RS mellows a bit of the acidity and presents more of a beeswax aroma and viscous texture all the while not being "sweet." Domaine Huet is known for their different appellation bottlings and stylings showing off a portion of the extent to what this grape can do. This is an opportunity for us to also see the similarities in the varietal expression that Riesling has.

My Notes:

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Wine #4: Le Garenne Sancerre Blanc 2022

Variety: Sauvignon Blanc

Appellation: Sancerre

Wine Notes: A delicate and complex Sancerre with great depth of fruit; the boisterous green aromatics often found in Sauvignon Blanc have been skillfully restrained, allowing fruity layers of green apples and lemons to show through.

My Thoughts: We have arrived at the rockstar of the moment, Sancerre. I really love what Sancerre is doing to the US wine market. Taking the place of Cali Chards and NZ Sauv Blancs, its elegance makes it more approachable than other Sauv Blancs while bringing other white wine drinkers into the fold. A prime example of knowing appellations and towns to identify their grapes. We start with the fact that Sancerre Blanc is in fact Sauvignon Blanc. An approachable, light, searingly acidic bright white wine can be a super crowd pleaser. Now the question is, what do you say to someone who likes Sancerre but says they do not like Sauv Blanc??? HMMMM.

My Notes:

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Wine #5: Lucien Reymond Sancerre Rose 2022

Variety: Pinot Noir

Appellation: Sancerre

Wine Notes: With a coral pink color with pastel shades, the nose is complex and reveals elegant notes of white fruits (peach) and ripe citrus fruits such as mandarin and clementine embellished with a few strawberry notes. The palate is fresh, juicy and suave. While perceiving notes of blood oranges, we find aromas of rosebud in the finish. A Sancerre that is both crisp and delicious.

My Thoughts: It's the most wonderful time of the year! It's rosé season so we are pouring a rosé! But not just any rosé, a Sancerre rosé. Making up barely 20% of the wines of Sancerre, Sancerre Pinot Noir is like a unicorn in the wine world. And if it is tough to find the red, imagine finding the rosé?? Another high acid bottling from the Loire (notice a trend?), these rosés are also super on trend. Making PN Rosé is hugely popular these days and then getting to say Sancerre just doubles down on the excitement.

My Notes:

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Wine #6: Domaine de Pallus Chinon Messanges Rouge 2022

Variety: Cabernet Franc

Appellation: Chinon

Wine Notes: A pure expression of Cabernet Franc. The grapes used for this cuvee are macerated for five days. Messanges is then aged in concrete tanks and stainless steel for over 6 months. The result is a soft wine with abundant bright red berry notes combined with mild spice, herbal and stony qualities. It is dangerously easy to drink.

My Thoughts: This is not your Bordeaux blending style of Cab Franc. Known under the labeling of Chinon, this wine will still show a bit of vegetal, pyrazine/green pepper aromas but will fire lean and bright red fruit. Although it has some body to it, this will show off the cooler climate style of Cab Franc. What I love about this tasting is that, very often we drink Cab Sauv and talk about Bordeaux and Napa, then we wander down the path to Cab Franc and its importance in blending. But TONIGHT, we get to look at what the PARENTS of Cab Sauv do around the Loire. It's sort of like we are visiting Cab Sauv's parents at their vacation home.

My Notes:

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Wine #7: Cave de Saumur Bourgueil Cabernet Franc

Lieu-dit Beauregard 2022

Variety: Cabernet Franc

Appellation: Bourgueil, Saumur

Wine Notes: Deep ruby-red. Very expressive, complex bouquet, featuring fresh fruit aromas (blackberry) with hints of violet, bitter chocolate and coffee. It starts out full-bodied and soft on the palate, following through with jammy red-berry fruit and a dry finish.

My Thoughts: Just north of Chinon is where you will find Bourgueil. And this wine is made from the grapes of a cooperative called Cave de Saumur. We should expect lighter body with floral and herbal notes. The term lieu-dit refers to a small geographic area that carries a key characteristic differentiating itself.

My Notes:
