The Loire Valley

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**Vocab**

* **Melon de Bourgogne:** aka Muscadet. Low natural acidity, wines tend to be medium-high acid. Some softness depending on winemaking style. Chaptalization common, should be consumed young.
  + Sur Lie: “on the lees”. Wines kept on dead yeast cells. Yeasts break down and impart mano-proteins (gives wine creaminess, rounded mouthfeel), and autolysis adds to wine’s flavor. Sur lie aging adds richness, complexity, body, ageability, and yeasty, yogurt-like notes. Muscadet Sur Lie must be bottled in cellar where made between March 1-June 30th and Oct 15-Nov 30th following harvest
* **Gros Plant**: aka Folle Blanche (Cognac). Largest VDQS in France. Low alcohol and high acid wine.
* **Chenin Blanc**: When young: floral, peach/apricot, honey, quince, pineapple. When aged: honey wet wool, lanolin, lemon, herbs, toast, menthol. Taut and luscious at once. Austere yet voluptuous. High acid and ages well, made in all styles.
* **Cabernet Franc**: When young, some bell pepper, strawberry, raspberry, cassis, plum and cherry. Aged=cinnamon, prune, licorice, dried flowers, dried fruit, hay, mint, truffles, ash.
* **Location:** 
  + Located along Loire Valley, which feeds into Atlantic and heads east (north west/central France)
  + SW of Paris
  + River spans 280 kilometres
* **Grape Varieties:** 
  + (W): Melon, Chenin Blanc, Gamay
  + (R): Cab Franc, Grolleau Noir, Pinot Noir
* **General Trade**
  + Leading producer of whites and fine sparkling wines
  + 3rd largest region in terms of production
  + 7,000 growers
* **4 Distinct Regions:** 
  + Pays Nantais
  + Anjou-Saumur
  + Touraine
  + Upper Loire

The Pays Nantais

* **Climate/Weather:**
  + Maritime. Cool, damp winters, cool and damp springs. Warm, mild summers. High humidity can cause mildew. Rainstorms in autumn can be bad for harvest
  + Temperate, damp, and humid
  + Considerable vintage variation
  + Frosts and hail=threats.
* **Grape Variety:** Melon de Bourgogne
* **Soil/Topography:**
  + Soils: Gneiss-dominated. Gravelly sub-soil over granite bedrock, schist and gneiss (volcanic, porous rock)
  + Lesser sites have sand and clay
* **Viticulture:**
  + Mostly single guyot with some trained on wires.
  + Mostly machine harvested
  + 8,000 ha down from 13,000 in 2008
* **Winemaking:**
  + Chaptalization common. Max of 2.5% abv addition
  + Specifies max alcoholic strength of 12%: only non-fortified French AOC like that
  + Some barrel-fermentation and lees stirring
    - Adds richness, complexity, body, yeastiness, ageability
  + Some wines retain CO2 which provides freshness
* **Maturation/Bottling:**
  + Muscadet Sur Lie must be bottled in cellar where made between March 1-June 30th and Oct 15-Nov 30th following harvest
* **Commercial/Economics:**
  + Early wine trade thrived because of access to Atlantic
  + Struggled in export markets after severe frosts cut production in 1991
* **Key Subregion(s):**
  + - Muscadet AOC
    - Muscadet Sèvre et Maine (75-80% of Muscadet AOC bottled). Named after rivers that run through it.
      * Communal Crus (Subzones): legal amendment approved by INAO and amendment to AOC should be coming. No Sur Lie on label b/c aging much longer than regular sur lie regs (17 months for Le Pallet and 20 for Clisson and 24 for Gorges)
        + Clisson: on granite
        + Gorges: on gabbro (alkaline volcanic rock similar to basalt)
        + Le Pallet: on orthogneiss (metamorphic igneous rock)
        + 6 additional crus awaiting official recognition
* **Labeling Terms**:
  + Hermine d’Or: designation given specifically to selected cuvees of Muscadet (tasted blind) that score highly. As near a guarantee of quality as you’ll find here. Picked for:
    - Typicity: trueness to type (no oak)
    - Ageability
    - Minerality
* **Notable Producers**
  + Domaine de la Louvetrie (Jo Landron, IDTT episode 117)

Anjou-Saumur

* **Grape Variety(ies):** 
  + (W): Chenin Blanc, Sauv Blanc, Chardonnay
  + (R): Cabernet Franc, Malbec (Cot), and Grolleau
* **Climate/Weather:**
  + Maritime, continental influences.
  + Severe winters and hot summers
  + Spring frosts and hail=threats
  + 500 mm rainfall
* **Soil/Topography:**
  + More granite and schist in the west, more chalk in the east
  + Well-drained, rich in marine fossils
* **Viticulture:**
  + Single or double guyot
* **Winemaking:**
  + Very diverse wines because of multiplicity of soils
* **Maturation/Bottling:**
* **Commercial/Economics:**
* **Key ACs:**
  + Anjou Villages:
    - Within Anjou AC
    - single/double guyot
    - 55hl/ha
    - Cab Sauv and Cab Franc only
  + Coteaux du Layon AC
    - Sweet white from Chenin Blanc
    - Schist with sandstone, silica granite and volcanic soils
    - Double Guyot or gobelet
    - Must concentration of 221 g/l of sugar
    - Hand-harvested in multiple tries, picking grapes that are over-ripened and high sugar levels, with or without Botrytis
      * Coteaux du Layon Village AC
        + 4 villages can append the villages term if vines have a min potential alcoholic strength of 13% and and actual strength of 12% (11% is minimum usually) and min must concentration of 22l g/l of sugar
  + Quarts de Chaume AC
    - Sweet white from Chenin Blanc--Cru of Coteaux du Layon
    - Viti: Double guyot or gobelet
    - Min 298 g/l of natural sugar (85 g/l RS). Highest minimum RA for any non-fortified dessert wine in FR.
    - 17 hl/ha
    - Land rented to the monks of Ronceray. Payment was ¼ of the harvest, hence name
    - No cryo-extraction allowed
    - As of 2010, can label own wines “Grand Cru”
  + Bonnezeaux AC
    - Sweet white from Chenin Blanc-- Cru of Coteaux du Layon
    - Schist and sandstone, quartz and silex
    - Double Guyot or gobelet
    - 25hl/ha: min 230 g/l of natural sugar
    - Many passes through vineyards
  + Savennieres AC
    - Dry white from Chenin
    - Schist, clay, sandstone
    - Double Guyot of gobelet
    - Crus:
      * Las Clos de la Coulee de Serrant: Monopole owned by Nicolas Joly. Red schist, farmed biodynamically
      * Roche au Moines: multiple owners, included Joly. SE-facing deep schist slope
    - 50 hl/ha (40 hl/ha for off-dry and sweet wines)
    - Some of France’s most age-worthy whites
    - French quince, honey, straw, candied lemon
      * Flavors may be due to Botrytis
  + Rose d’Anjou
    - Rose AC only
    - Grolleau, Cab Franc, Gamay, Cab Sauv, Pineau d’Aunis, Cot
    - Single/double guyot
    - By law, generally slightly sweet. My bae Jancis calls it “sickly sweet”. RS between 7-20 g/l
    - Aromas of roses, red berries, and bananas
  + Cabernet d’Anjou
    - Also a Rose AC
    - Blend of both Cabs
    - 55 hl/ha
    - Medium sweet. Min 10g/l RS
    - More refined and longer-lasting than Rose d’Anjou
  + Rose de Loire
    - Rose AC only
    - 30% Cab Franc min. Rest is Cab Sauv, Grolleau, Pineau d’Aunis, Gamay, and Cot
    - 60 hl/ha
    - DRY!!

Saumur (soils move to limestone going east), more sparkling production than anything

* + Saumur AC
    - Dry red, rose, white and sparkling
    - 60 hl/ha
    - Generally single guyot
    - Whites: min 80% Chenin with rest Chard, SB
    - Reds from Cab Franc (majority), Cab Sauv, Pineau d’Aunis
  + Saumur-Champigny
    - Dry red
    - Single guyot
    - Cab Franc (majority), Cab Sauv, Pineau d’Aunis (rare)

Touraine

* + **Location:** East of Anjou-Saumur
  + **Grape Variety(ies):**
    - (W); Chenin Blanc (Pineau de la Loire), Sauv Blanc,
    - (R): Cab Franc (Breton), Gamay, Malbec (Cot), Grolleau
  + **Climate/Weather:**
    - Continental with maritime influence in west
  + **Soil/Topography:**
    - Tuffeau: Chalk boiled down by volcanic action
      * Very porous
      * Lots of minerals
      * Good water retention
      * Vines establish deep root system
      * High calcium content makes vibrantly acidic wines
      * Found in Vouvray, Chinon, and Montlouis
      * Can be tunneled to make cellars, eg Champagne
  + **Viticulture:**
  + **Winemaking:**
  + **Maturation/Bottling:**
  + **Commercial/Economics:**
  + **Key ACs:**
    - Touraine AC
      * Dry reds and whites
      * Soils varied:
        + Perruches (clay mixed with flint)
        + Aubuis (calcareous on chalky subsoil)
        + And sand on clay in the east
        + Sauvignon de Touraine=dry white
    - Chinon AC
      * Dry red, 8% rose and white
      * Reds from Cabernet Franc with max 10% Cabernet Sauv
      * Single and double guyot
      * Tuffeau soils. Gravelly alluvial on the Vienne River bank, clay and limestone and clay/sand on hills and plateaus
    - Bourgeil AC
      * Dry reds from Cabernet Franc with max of 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, some rose made
        + Strawberry, graphite notes, dried herbs with age
      * 55 hl/ha single guyot
      * 50% of vineyard area on hillside overlooking the Loire, soil made up of Turonian chalk, other half is sand and gravel terraces
    - Saint-Nicolas de Bourgeil
      * West of Bourgeil
      * Warmer soils with higher percentages of sand
        + Lighter wines than those of Chinon or Bourgeil
        + Less densely-pigmented, more generous fruit
        + Quick-maturing, should be consumed upon release
      * Dry reds and roses from Cabernet Franc, max 10% Cab Sauv
      * 55 hl/ha, single guyot
    - Vouvray
      * Still, sparkling, dry/off-dry/sweet wines produced from Chenin Blanc. Finest vintages show botrytis
        + 66% sparkling production in 2015
      * Tuffeau bedrock covered with perruche (flint and clay) and aubuis chalk (mixed w/clay)
      * Levels of sweetness
        + Sec: 3-5 g/l of RS
        + Demi-Sec (half-dry): 10-20 g/l RS
        + Moelleux: Sweet, over 50 g/l RS, some well over
      * Appellation rules changed in Oct 2009 so that wines must be made within commune to be labeled as such
        + Leading Loire winemakers Francois Chidane and Jacky Blot banned from vinifying Vouvray wines in nearby Montlouis, now selling as Vin de France
  + **Key Producers:**
    - Champalou?
    - Domaine Pichot

Upper Loire

* **Location:** Farthest east in Loire
* **Grape Variety(ies):**
  + Sauvignon Blanc: can get chlorosis. Gooseberry, elderflower, elderflower, high acid, doesn’t age well
  + Chasselas
  + Pinot Noir
* **Climate/Weather:**
  + Continental. Warmer summers and cooler winters
  + Like everywhere else in Loire, risk of hail and frost
* **Soil/Topography:**
  + Calcareous Soil: Chalky, stony, well-draining
    - Flint added in Pouilly-Fume (silex)
  + Kimmeridgean Clay
    - Sticky clay version of Chablis soils with interspersed gray limestone
    - Ex: Menetou-Salon, Quincy (some), Reuilly
  + Wines produced on marl and flint need more time to develop
* **Viticulture:**
  + 80% machine-harvested
* **Winemaking:**
* **Maturation/Bottling:**
* **Commercial/Economics:**
* **Key ACs:** 
  + Sancerre
    - Dry whites and reds and roses
      * 80% white from Sauvignon Blanc
      * Pinot Noir: Makes reds and roses: cherry, plum, soft, silky tannins
    - 60% exported
    - Soils:
      * Caillottes (pebbly chalk)
      * Terres Blanches ( Chalk on Kimmeridgean marl)
      * Silex
    - Cordon or single guyot
    - South facing slopes at higher elevations
  + Pouilly-Fume
    - Dry whites only
    - 52% exported
    - Similar soils as Sancerre
      * Sauv Blanc grown on flint adds gunpowder/smoke notes “Fume”
      * Gravels mixed with sand yield rounder, fruiter SBs
      * Clay=rounder, creamier texture
    - Typically on low-growing trellises
  + Reuilly
    - Dry white, red, and rose
    - Sauv Blanc, PN, PG
    - Best from Kimmeridgean Marl
    - Single/Double guyot
    - SB similar in style to Quincy
    - Rose=Vin gris du Pinot Gris with PN blended in
    - 15% exported
  + Quincy
    - Dry white only from SB
      * SB ripens a week earlier than Sancerre, higher potential alcohols, lower acids and creamier, softer character
      * Kimmeridgian below alluvial soils
      * Mechanical harvesting
      * Commercial yeasts
      * Only 14% exported
  + Menetou-Salon
    - SW of Sancerre
    - Dry whites (SB, 80% of production), reds, roses from Pinot Noir/PG
    - Flatter vineyards than Sancerre
    - Limestone-based soils
    - Only 13% exported
  + Val du Loire IGP
    - Previously named Vin de Pays Jardin du Val de la France, changed in 2007.
    - 1700 wine growers, 80 negociants
    - 52% white, 28% red and 20% rose
* **Key Producers**
  + Claude Riffault (favorite Sancerre)
  + Jean-Max Roger (Sancerre)