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)