

GOING UPSTREAM IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

OR, HOW WE CAME TO LOVE THE BRIGHT AND SPICY REDS GROWN ALONG THE RIVER IN THE 'GARDEN OF FRANCE'

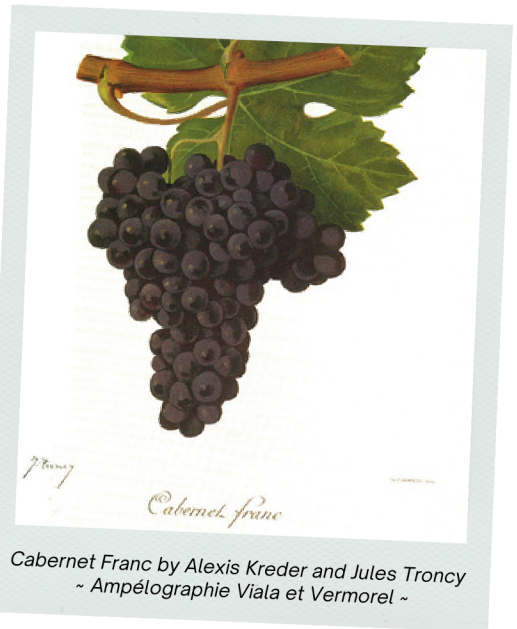
Let's see: the club has featured Cabernet Franc, Tempranillo, Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Grenache ... are we back here already? Yes, but allow me to explain.

The October Club lined up perfectly with our Loire Valley wine tastings, and the Cab Franc theme in April was one of our most popular club months. We also strive to make seasonal connections for weather, food, and wine, and I posit the Loire Valley Cabernet Franc (Franc) and Pinot Noir (Pinot) in this release will have you wishing it was Fall all year long.

Previously, Loire reds were known to be underripe and too peppery for many palettes, including Americans. Today Cab Franc, Pinot and other reds (Pineau d'Aunis, anyone?) are back in-demand as the overripe styles of the new world and high prices of Bordeaux and Burgundy turn away wine drinkers seeking balance..

Bolstered by quality organic farming, a warming climate, and centuries of family know-how, a growing clientele of curious drinkers is returning to the Loire for freshness, purity, and charm. The Valley and its many historic wines seems poised for a come back.

The overwhelmingly drinkable, albeit a bit spicy, Franc and Pinot featured here are indispensable when the weather turns cool and the savory flavors of Fall exude from ovens, stoves, and grills. Exploring the Loire River and its namesake valley opens up a world of flavor and history unlike any other region. Grab your corkscrew and let's dive in.



Follow along with tasting videos to get a closer look at the wines before opening them up! winesintandem.com/videos



ANDRÉ VATAN

SANCERRE ROUGE



Owner and Winemaker for 35 years, André Vatan

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VATAN’S 9 BUILDING ESTATE AND HAS THE FEEL OF A RURAL HAMLET THAT NEIGHBORS AFFECTIONATELY REFER TO AS ‘VATANVILLE’
“

Alright Ryan, you’re telling me that you stuck a Pinot Noir in a Loire Valley Cabernet Franc club feature. And to complicate things even more, you chose to replace my favorite white - Sancerre - with its less popular Rouge? Qui!

Winery You know you’re onto something when a wine that has a worldwide following still doesn’t have a website. They do have Facebook and Instagram, however. André and wife Ariel have run the estate since the late 1980s, when Andre’s father passed away. Today son Adrien is also involved. In Sancerre, most producers focus on Sauvignon Blanc, which is also true of Vatan, including three distinct bottlings. For Pinot Noir, it’s often a passion wine for producers who on occasion make a great rosé. Maulin Bele, one of four estate vineyards, is the source of their excellent Pinot.

Region I’ll take this chance to jump on the Sancerre “sahn-sair” bandwagon, which made headlines this summer in the SF Chronicle: “This wine’s unstoppable popularity is baffling Bay Area restaurants.” There were valid speculations about its demand, but I’m going to say this: It’s delicious, it’s easy to pronounce, and it sounds classy. “Sancerrrrrre” with 5 r’s. Sancerre is deep in Loire Valley, where prehistoric limestone soils add complexity to Sav Blanc and Pinot Noir that purists love. Sorry New Zealand.

Wine For all intents and purposes, Sancerre’s Blanc is hogging the spotlight of Sancerre Rouge, but that could change quickly. This makes a value-driven wine purveyor like me extremely happy. With meticulous farming on clay and iron rich soils, aged in a small amount of oak barrels, Vatan’s Pinot Noir is a real treat. Aromas of bright red fruits and crushed rocks lead to a candy-like juiciness and tart raspberry finish. It’s quite sensational and a joy to drink. In terms of value, there are few \$30 Pinots of this quality. Maybe red wine lovers will start asking for “Sancerre Rouge”!

Pairing The great thing about serving Pinot Noir is that people take it very seriously. Looking to impress at your next neighborhood potluck? Me too. Serve with a leek quiche with bacon and gruyere. The wine’s acidity will cut nicely through the bacon and butter, and the tart berries will befriend the sweet and salty gruyere. Okay to sub Delicata squash for bacon, and if quiche isn’t your thing, try a tarte or thin crust pizza.

Retail price \$29.00 | Member price: \$23.20



Winemaker Kevin Fontaine (L) and Famille Genet

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**OUR ENVIRONMENTAL
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”

I feel giddy featuring a wine like this. Kermit Lynch, one of American’s most lauded wine importers and authors revealed the tales of his discoveries in [Adventures on the Wine Route](#). That book, one of my most treasured, is how I learned of Charles Joguet.

Winery Charles Joguet was an artist in Paris who regularly traveled home to Chinon to oversee the family domaine and the winemaking. With an artist's perspective, his focus was to create authentic wines that took more effort in the vineyard and more time in the winery to evolve. A concept that today seems en vogue for craft winemaking was ludicrous from the 1950's to 70's. He became a martyr for making wines that expressed their true sense of place. Although he retired and sold the winery in 1985, he stayed on for 12 years to oversee the transition to the Genets. 12!

Region Chinon “she-non” has been a source of the lighter and earlier drinking style of Franc for centuries. Today it’s no secret that the traditionally cool region is benefitting from a warmer climate, at least in terms of ripening wines to reveal more fruit. Chinon sits just south of the Loire River, near the confluence of the Vienne of Loire Rivers, adding to the complexity of the soil types. Alluvial and sandy soils yield softer wines, but the soils of this wine contain more limestone and a higher percentage of smaller gravelly rocks or ‘petite roches’; an ideal introduction to Joguet’s signature style.

Wine You can't miss the vibrant purple color and the aromas of fruit and spice. Green pepper, clove and pencil shavings are typical of Chinon, although a hot vintage like 2020 smells like Fall in a glass. The medium body and higher acidity makes this wine incredibly easy to drink, sometimes too easy, so pace yourself! The tart finish of blackberry and black cherry is both chewy and crunchy, only adding to the joy of such a complex, yet pleasurable wine.

Pairing With MLB playoffs and NFL Sundays sure to draw a hungry crowd at your place, this is a winner. If you have no intention of drinking Chinon while the 49ers march to the Super Bowl, let's switch gears. Stuff roasted red peppers with ground turkey, walnuts and feta while listening to Edith Piaf and you have a divine, Parisian inspired evening. And of course there's Thanksgiving! A brilliant match for this wine.

Retail price \$33.00 | Member price: \$26.40

DOM. DE LA CHEVALERIE

BOURGUEIL



Famille Caslot in their vineyards

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**MINDFUL OF
PRESERVING THE
ESSENTIAL BALANCE OF
OUR ECOSYSTEM, WE
WORK ACCORDING TO
ORGANIC AND
BIODYNAMIC
PRINCIPLES.**
”

Thanks to the enormity of the wine world, it's still easy to stumble upon a winery that is so unique and interesting, you wonder how on earth their wines have slipped under your radar. In other words, great discoveries can still be found! Domaine de la Chevalerie is one of those places and I'm thrilled their 2015 is still available to share.

Winery I suppose 'old-school' is no longer relevant in the Loire Valley, where families have been connected with domaines for centuries. And the Caslot family, in their thirteenth generation, shows no signs of slowing down. The current sibling team has converted the estate to organics AND biodynamics, and soil mapped their vineyards to understand and maximize quality at every turn. They also open their doors to visitors and I recommend a trip there because their lineup of wines is tremendous, and I have loved every one - our quintessential small, family winery with history.

Region Bourgueil “bore-goyle” is on the south facing slopes overlooking the Loire River, between the towns of Saumur and Tours. Soils of the Breteche vineyard have a meter of clay atop the soft and acidic tuffeau limestone. This combination provides both the rich concentration of clay soils and the lightness and bright minerality of limestone. The region is only a touch warmer here than neighboring Saumur Champigny, but sometimes just enough to reveal a deep red tinted ripeness and dark fruit that balances out the sometimes green peppers and spice. And in vintages like 2015, relatively warm and dry, this combination gives Bourgueil the chance to age for a decade or more. Hence my delight in finding this 2015!

Wine A gorgeous red color leads to aromas of ripe, concentrated berries and a pepperminty, fleshy fruit quality. Like a perfectly ripe plum. The palette is structured and balanced, with an immediate chalky dryness like the skin of a stone fruit. The strength of dense clay soils in a cooler region, mingles with smoke and the ripe fruit flavors of red currants and dark cherries of a warmer vintage. It does not taste anywhere near 8 years old, but I wouldn't wait another minute to pull the cork.

Pairing - If you travel to the Loire, you will eat like a king. Open the 2015 Breteche and treat yourself and guests with an herb roasted leg of lamb and champignon farcis (stuffed mushroom caps) alongside garlic and chive mashed potatoes.

Retail price \$30.00 | Member price: \$24.00