



DIRECT PRESS

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LOIRE YOU EXPERIENCED?

The heart of France is the

Loire Valley. You could disagree but you can't ignore the ways it is both a geographic center and a keystone to the country, as well as being known as 'France's Garden'. The river, deemed the 'last wild river' because it's not dammed, was a historic cultural divider between the north and south of France: Occitan was spoken south of the Loire; Old French — what eventually became the official French language — was spoken north of the river. The Loire was also the scene of the beginning of modern France: Joan of Arc was led by visions of angels to the Castle of Chinon, where she convinced Charles VII to fight off the English occupiers.

For wine purposes, the Loire River was one of the most important transportation routes in Europe, and it helped spread Loire wines all over the world. Going west, Loire wines sailed to England and the rest

of the world through Nantes and the ports on the Atlantic Ocean. Going east, Loire wines quenched the thirsty populace of Paris.

If I was forced to only drink wines from one region, I wouldn't hesitate. Bracing, mineral whites from Muscadet; complex, tannic Cabernet Franc from Bourgueil; quaffable, irreverent glou-glou made from Gamay, Grolleau, or Pineau d'Aunis; age-worthy Chenin with a touch of sweetness — the Loire covers a lot of ground and rarely gets boring. It's long been one of my favorites because of this huge range of styles.

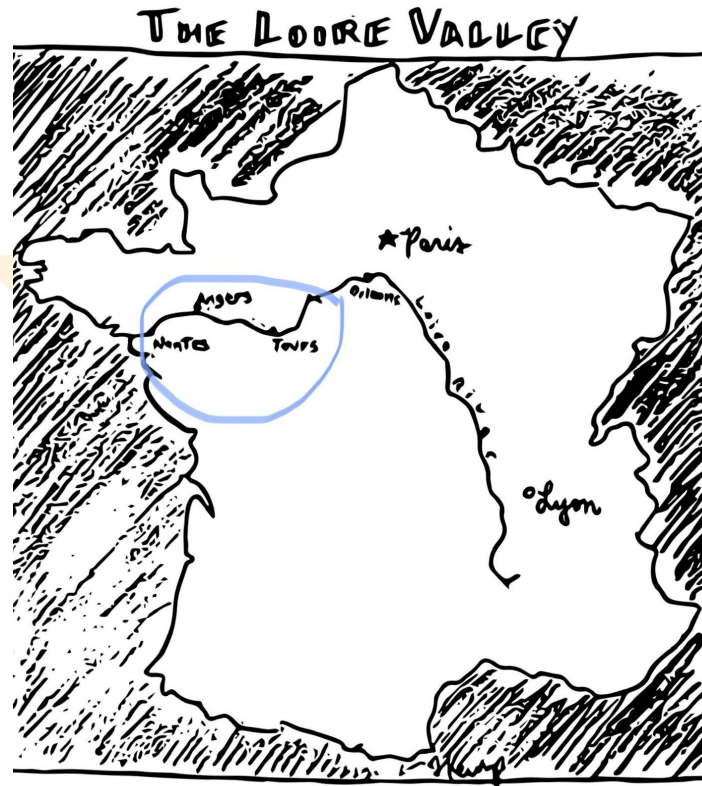
The Loire River is the longest in France, at 630 miles long, so we're only covering the western Loire this month, where the majority of the region's wines are made (sorry, no Sancerre this month). Though the region is quite large, it has more soil types, microclimates, and grape varieties than any other region in France.

By contrast, Bordeaux is far bigger, and far more monolithic in terms of its offerings. Why is that? I'm not sure exactly, but because Loire in the modern age has never had the aristocratic appeal of Bordeaux or Burgundy, it may have allowed for more experimentation and freedom. With big money comes big expectations after all, and the Loire never had access the kind of capital that Bordeaux or Champagne did.

Though Loire wines were associated with royals in the middle ages, by the 18th and 19th centuries they were far more associated with the middle class. Shopkeepers, merchants, bookkeepers, tradesmen, and other bourgeoisie in Paris couldn't often afford the finest wines but they were not going to drink the acrid swill the working classes slurped down from vineyards surrounding the city. The Loire offered them a level of quality and value not found elsewhere, and the region grew alongside the expanding middle class after the Revolution.

This also partially explains the higher percentage of small, family-owned farms and wineries that still exist in the region, making it accessible for younger, independent growers, and those pursuing natural viticulture. So it's no wonder the Loire feels like one of the most vibrant, flourishing locales: nowhere else have I seen the hardcore nannies working right next to the stewards of tradition more harmoniously. I also wonder if this is because much of the Loire had to fight for its status over the past forty years in a way that Bordeaux and Burgundy did not. In many cases, the path to a better reputation was not through better marketing but through better farming.

Have you ever tasted those green bell pepper flavors in Cabernet Franc or that almost ammonia-like scent in Sauvignon Blanc (cat pee)? That is due to *pyrazines*, a compound that diminishes as grapes ripen. The Loire's climate is generally *doux et humide* (mild and damp) and on the northern frontier of European grape production, so it's cool enough that



Above: The Loire is the longest river in France at 630 miles, but most of the wine production comes from the area west of Blois, circled in blue. (Map by J. Kemp)



underripe grapes with vegetal-tasting pyrazines can be a serious problem. Making it worse were the standards of the post-war period, encouraging high yields to meet demand. This made for a lot of sour, green Loire wine. Lowering yields and improving soils through better ecological practices played a huge role in eliminating this, and still do.

Bernard Baudry (*Press 4 Red*) is the perfect example of how this played out. Chinon after WWII became known for supplying Paris with mediocre bistro wines at a time when there was more wine consumption per capita than today — and little competition from abroad. Bernard started out with two hectares in 1975 and was apparently ridiculed by his more established neighbors as some kind of an eccentric fool for working his soils manually and not using fertilizers or chemical treatments. Yet he was on to something. In addition to lowering yields and making the soils and the grapes healthier and less green, he found a lot of untapped potential in Chinon. Many of Chinon's vineyards were destroyed during WWII, but they were replanted on flatter parcels that were easier to work with machines. Bernard reclaimed the steeper slopes that had been used in previous generations, and paid close attention to the subsoils. He and his son Matthieu, who has been making the wines for well over a decade, express different soil

Above: Matthieu Baudry in the Croix Boissée vineyard. He and his father Bernard helped restore Chinon's reputation by lowering yields, working organically, and reclaiming hillsides that had been left fallow after WWII. (photo by J. Kemp)

types in their wines— limestone, clay, iron, *tuffeau*, and sand – like few other estates in the world.

The Baudry's now have 30 hectares and are one of the absolute finest models of a winery that has scaled up while not compromising on natural, labor-intensive methods or organic farming. Though they are well-established and respected these days, they don't hesitate to use their reputation to help younger winemakers gain access to the Chinon

appellation. One of the more interesting wines I tasted this year was from a small winery called Clos Kixhaya, a younger couple who were working way beyond organics or Biodynamics and using little or zero sulfur. The more typical story is established wineries forcing anyone like them with cloudy or funky wines to label them as basic *Vin de France* but Beatriz Papamija of Kixhaya said Matthieu Baudry was an important, eager supporter in helping them gain the Chinon AOC status.

Another one of the most inclusive and thriving AOCs is Cheverny. In the 1990s it

became another early frontier for natural wine due, in no small part, to the Puzelat brothers. Thierry and Jean-Marie Puzelat's 'Tue-Boeuf' estate became the Loire outpost of the natural wine movement, as the Puzelats were so moved by the Beaujolais' of Lapierre, Metras, other



followers of Jules Chauvet that they quickly started converting their family's vines to organic farming and were experimenting with zero sulfur wines. As Thierry put it in this interview with importer Jules Dressner, "The first time I drank a natural wine, it put me in the same state as Bernadette Soubirous in front of the Virgin Mary. A year later, I was attempting my first 100% grape [zero addition] vinification. Working organically became an evidence to me a few months later. Ever since, I visit Ville-Morgon [in Beaujolais] every year the way some go to Lourdes; there aren't any miracles, but there's certainly joy for me!"



Thierry kept the faith and spread it like an apostle burning with the spirit. When his older brother was weary of taking on more work and purchasing more land, Thierry began a negociant project that was a huge influence in Cheverny, as he paid growers more to convert to or continue working organically. Many of them whose families simply sold off their grapes saw that they could start bottling their own wines, too, leading to a groundswell of newly christened growers in Cheverny like Herve Villemade, Christian Venier, Philippe Tessier, and others. Thierry's partner in this negociant project was Pierre-Olivier Bonhomme, a teenage high school dropout who



had helped with some harvests at Tue-Boeuf. It was a wise choice, as Pierre-O has been making the wines that have made both him and Thierry known around the world since 2011. Thierry officially went back to Tue-Boeuf full-time around 2013, and Pierre-O makes wines like Telquel (*Press 4 Mix/Red*) in the Tue-Boeuf style, made with zero sulfur unless it's absolutely needed. This wine, always Gamay-dominant, is one of the most beloved and affordable wines I have the pleasure of working with, and it serves as a beacon for the world at large to the playful, unpretentious wines of the Loire Valley's first generation of natural winemakers.



Another of this early generation was Christine and Joel Menard of Domaine des Sablonnettes (*Press 4 Mix/White*), further west in Anjou. Christine and Joel Ménard of Domaine des Sablonnettes were making natural wine in the early 2000s, long before anyone in New York ever started calling it natural wine. Decades of organic and Biodynamic farming coupled with meticulous winemaking has rewarded them with exceptionally rich soils, healthy, vibrant fruit, and consistently stellar wines year after year. Christine and Joel's son, Jeremy, who heads the winemaking now, continues his parents practice of making wines with minimal intervention, no artificial yeasts, little or no sulfur —

Above: The Sablonnettes' whimsical, irreverent labels (far left) have always stood apart from the crowd, just like their wines. Christine and Joel Menard (center) have now handed over the operations to their son, Jeremy (far right) who is continuing their beautiful project.

and even less fanfare. Somehow the Sablonnettes wines have not gone viral on Instagram, which has kept them thankfully affordable and accessible to their loyal followers. Whenever these wines hit our shelves, people remark on how little the prices have gone up compared to many other wineries of a similar ilk. They are the perfect wines to put into peoples' hands who want to experience natural Loire wines on a weeknight. An anonymous winemaker is quoted as saying 'The Loire is paradise on a weekday.' Sablonnettes is what that tastes like.

In addition to the inclusive attitudes, the relative affordability and the wide range of raw materials to work with, the Loire Valley's proximity to Paris has been a huge help in making it one of the regions most identified with natural wine. It's an easy trek for international travelers going to natural wine fairs like *Le Dive Bouteille* and its peripheral tastings. There's an entrancing mix of history and scrappy possibility in the Loire that is hard to describe. Despite the castles and *chateaux*

that bring in tourists, it's the kind of place that draws you in with more humble pleasures. In my visits, I've slept in anarchist communal housing with no heat in February, not removing my wool hat for a week; wandered around tasting chilly, just-bottled, funky wines in 40 degree caves; trudged through muddy, half-frozen vineyards in the rain; warmed my hands

over trash cans of burning wood crates; spoke only occasionally in badly muttered French; and I would do it again in a heartbeat. The best butter and paté I've had was in the Loire, and the bottles of wine that disappear in five minutes are not bad either. But what really draws you in is the sense that maybe you, too, could build something there in the damp earth. You could get your hands dirty in



the Loire and create beauty, and though you might be a little isolated, eventually people would come looking for the same thing; and they'd find you there, ready with a clean(ish) glass of wine and open arms.

Cheers!
Jonathan Kemp
Bruno Sant'Anna

Above: Patrick Desplats is one of the most zealous natural winemakers around. In Anjou he can manage to live on the fringes and share his passion for wine and his conscientious stewardship of his small piece of the Loire. There are only so many places where you feel lucky to be drinking wine in the woods with near strangers in January. (photo by J. Kemp)

Domaine des Sablonnettes "Le P'tit Blanc" 2021

Anjou • Loire • France

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White]

We're always delighted by how much charm and life the wines from Christine and Joel Menard (and now their son Jeremy) offer year in and out. Jonathan accurately pointed out recently that these are one of the few hold outs of the OG, "20 and change" wines in this ever evolving scene of natural wines, and how fun it is to be able to enjoy these without pretense and ceremony. The couple have been devoted to Biodynamic farming and winemaking for over three decades in the heart of the Coteaux du Layon AOC (an area famous for its botrytized dessert wines), and stay very busy with a number of different cuvees you've likely seen on our shelves. Cabernet Franc, Grolleau, Gamay and Chenin Blanc are the prime materials, with all cuvees fermenting spontaneously and bottled without fining or filtration.

Le P'tit Blanc is a playful, pure and fragrant take on Chenin Blanc, from a parcel of vines planted on schist and fermented in stainless steel tanks. It is medium bodied wine with clarity, salted Bosc pear, orange pith, and a very cool, "essential oil" top note. *Bruno Sant'Anna*

Le Sot de l'Ange 'ALZ' Blanc 2021

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White]

Quentin Bourse of Le Sot de l'Ange did not come from a winemaking family and he was always self-conscious of not attending

university, but in the Loire he found a home making wine and following a path he did not imagine as a much younger man. He references this in the name of his winery: *Le Sot de l'Ange* roughly translates to the 'angel fool' but this is self deprecating, to be sure. These days Quentin is as known for his uncompromising precision in the vineyards and cellar as he is for his intense work ethic and his love of hockey. He interned and learned from many of the best in the Loire, including famed Vouvray producer Domaine Huet. When he got an opportunity to take over some friend's vines in 2013 he jumped and never looked back. His vineyard has been certified Biodynamic for over a decade, making him an outlier in his tiny Touraine subzone of Azay-le-Rideau.



ALZ is a blend of Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay, and it shows off the ability of Loire wines to be simultaneously lush and cutting: this combination is stupidly delicious, in case you were wondering. It has a creamy body and notes of canned pear and pineapple juice, but there is a good dose of Meyer

Above: Quentin Bourse is among the encouraging wave of younger winemakers who have come from elsewhere in France to the Loire, showing a path forward for sleepy subregions like Azay-le-Rideau with better farming and hard work. (photo by Selection Massale)

lemon and winter citrus in there to lift it up and give it some Vitamin C. *Jonathan Kemp*

Domaine de la Chevalerie 'Galichets' Bourgueil 2017

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]

The Caslot family of Domaine de la Chevalerie are noted for their warmth and hospitality in a region that is pretty friendly to begin with. Their vines have been certified Biodynamic since 2012 but were organic for many, many years before that. They still represent an astounding value, with Cabernet Franc that earnestly expresses subtle differences in soil types.

'Galichets' is a parcel of vines averaging 60 years of age, mostly on deeper soils intermixed with alternating layers of sand, gravel, silex, and clay. They have enough structure and heft to gain complexity with bottle age, but they remain humble and understated. This only adds to the beauty and profundity, in my opinion. Wines with this much nuance and mystery are just not found at this price. It speaks to the Loire's enduring charms for those in the know and to the hard work of the minority of growers who have turned near-backwater appellations like Bourgueil

into some of the most interesting in the world for studious wine lovers.

Upon first opening this wine I was greeted with the familiar aroma of pop-rocks as a sense memory. This speaks to me for most of the red wines I gravitate towards. Something bright, lively, fruit forward, high acid, and integrated tannins. This wine has it all plus a bit more complexity. After the initial wave of fruit jumped at me I started to pick up blueberry jam and white pepper

on the nose. On the palate I tasted bright purple fruit similar to a ripe plum in summer, followed by a bit of dried rose or lilac, and finishing with a bit of a savory note reminiscent of a nice onion or shallot. Overall this wine would go

great with grilled eggplant, Mediterranean fare, a substantial herbaceous salad and lighter red meat preparations.

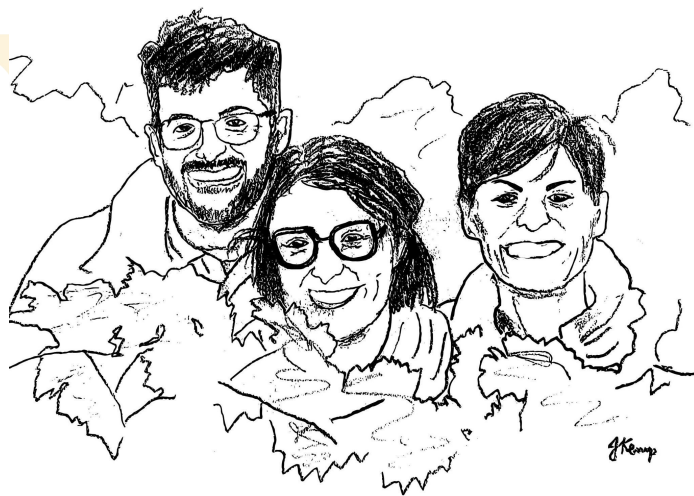
Jonathan Kemp & Jeremy Hernandez

Bonhomme 'Le Telquel' Rouge 2021

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]

Pierre-Olivier Bonhomme is continuing the work he and Thierry Puzelat began many years ago. It was Thierry's idea to expand beyond his family's Tue-Boeuf wines and purchase fruit from neighbors and other growers, allowing him to make more of the



Above: Emmanuel, Laurie, and the late Stephanie Caslot of Domaine de la Chevalerie. Stephanie tragically passed away in 2021. (illustration by J. Kemp)

easy-drinking natural wine he loved while encouraging others to farm their vines organically, paying them more than they would get for selling conventionally-farmed fruit to others.



Looking back after a decade plus, this has been crucially transformative for the region and many vignerons. When Thierry picked Pierre-O to partner with, he was a high-school dropout who had just been working harvests at Tue-Boeuf. Yet Pierre-O has kept this project at the forefront of Loire natural wines since 2013, when Thierry went back to Tue-Boeuf full-time. Thierry knew what he was doing when teaming up with Pierre-O.

The name *Telquel* is, surprise surprise, a pun. It's a riff on *teckel* (the French for Dachshund) spun to sound like the phrase for "as is". The idea here to make a simple table wine that reflects the vintage. The blend changes every year but is always Gamay dominant and sulfur is typically not added. The wine's "*Un Poil Dur...*" tag line extends the canine pun. It literally translates to "a hard hair" but is slang for "rough around the edges."

This wine is a tad rough around the edges but in the best way. It's always a tad rustic, nervy, full of energy and complexity. It has enough fruit and acid to be refreshing and enough savory and tannin to stand up to complex meals. I get floral berry aromatics mixed in with bright spring herb garden on the nose. On the palate I get a bit of underripe currant, menthol, anise, and white pepper.



I fell in love with this wine earlier this year and it has reinforced my love of Gamay. This year this is a blend of Gamay, Cab Franc, and a bit of Syrah and Grenache from the Roussillon region. With climate change hitting the Loire hard, it has been increasingly common to make up for fruit destroyed by frost and hail by purchasing grapes from the south.

Jonathan Kemp & Jeremy Hernandez

Top left: Pierre-O Bonhomme is making the wines that are among the most loved and identifiable in the natural wine world. Right: Pierre-O and his mentor Thierry Puzelat's catchphrase 'You need to calm down' displayed outside PO's cellar. (photos by Jules Dressner)

Bernard Baudry "Les Granges" Chinon 2021

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 4 Red]

Bernard Baudry was instrumental in making Chinon such a well-respected appellation. In the 1970s yields were high and quality was low, but Bernard went in the opposite direction when he began in 1975. He gained a reputation for highlighting the texture and serious qualities of Cabernet Franc in the region, and they are now known around the world for making the best examples of Chinon. The estate is certified organic, they use their own composts, harvests are all done by hand, and sulfur levels are low. They aren't going for massive extraction but their wines have a lot of depth and develop extremely well with age. Even their top wines are still relative values compared to Clos Rougeard and other highly sought-after Loire producers. Though Bernard is technically retired and his son Matthieu has been working with him since 2000, Bernard hasn't really stopped being involved.

The "Les Granges" is from their younger vines, but these are not really that young

anymore, planted in 1985 and 1988 on clay and sandy soils. Fermented and aged in cement tank, it is a superbly serious wine for the price. This vintage is a classic Chinon profile, with its mix of earthier tones and beautiful, floral lift. Spiced red plum, cherry, cinnamon, and cumin with delicate, peppery tannins. There is a savory shallot note with a chalky, tangy lift at the end. This wine somehow manages to feel sincerely profound and thirst-quenchingly unimposing at the same time. *Jonathan Kemp*



Domaine des Gâtz 'Paillette' Red 2020

Nantais • Loire • France

[Press 4 Red]

This is a new project that again speaks to the relative access for the younger generation of winemakers in the Loire — or the generosity of the older generation. In this case it was the latter, as Maxime Petit and Alexis Frenkel, childhood friends, were able to take over four hectares from Jacques Carroget of Domaine de la Paonnerie. Carroget was an early adopter of organic and Biodynamic practices and has since pushed for the *Vin méthode Nature* label, the first in France to denote natural winemaking.

For their part, Maxime and Alexis have managed to get the zero sulfur designation

Above: Winter vineyard drinking at Domaine des Gâtz in the Nantais. Alexis Frenkel (far right) and Maxime Petit were lucky to be the benefactors of longtime natural wine figure Jacques Carroget (second from left). (Photo by Ouest-France)

as well on their first wine, called 'Paillette.' It's made from 70 year-old Gamay vines planted on schist and has the nervier tension that is more typical of the Coteaux d'Ancenis, which is in the Loire Valley's most western reaches, closer to Nantes and the Atlantic Ocean. Sour cherry, black plum, and chewy, iron, tangy notes make this an exciting, energetic wine with snappy, bright attitude. It's made with a ten day semi-carbonic maceration using the *millefeuille* technique of layering de-stemmed grapes and whole clusters in the same vat. Only 150 cases made. Can't wait to see what's next from Maxime and Alexis. *Jonathan Kemp*

Ludovic Chanson "Les Cabotines"

Montlouis-sur-Loire 2019

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 4 White]

Chenin Blanc is an endlessly rewarding grape that is one of the world's superior varieties. It, like Riesling, is among the few grapes that can make truly great wine across the spectrum from sticky sweet to austere dry. It can be overwhelming to figure out what you'r getting sometimes, but the wines from Montlouis are a great place to dive in.



Above: Montlouis is a scenic tourist destination on the Loire, complete with medieval chateaus, but the Loire is still, by and large, a region of quiet villages and small family wineries.

Ludovic Chanson is detail-oriented and science-minded for most things, but when it comes to Biodynamic farming, he finds freedom in accepting he doesn't have to understand everything on how it works. It's more about trusting the process that so clearly makes a positive difference. His wines are ripe, fragrant and expressive, with an underlying energy that keeps them inviting. I find that the ethos for growers in Montlouis is far more independent-minded than in the more staid Vouvray just across the river. Leading voices like Francois Chidaine and Jacky Blot, both champions of expressing unique vineyards with natural methods, have inspired the work of a talented new generation of growers like Franz Saumon and Ludovic Chanson.

'Les Cabotines' is the signature cuvee from Ludovic, a dry wine in the Montlouis style, serious, textured and respecting the local terroir. 100% Chenin Blanc all from Chanson's estate holdings. Fermented and aged in barrel, this has bruised apple and rooty ginger notes typical of Chenin from Montlouis. Fuzzy stone fruit notes with subtle caramel and honeyed tones. There's a bit of botrytis, aka 'noble rot', adding a richness that almost seems sweet but is really just creamy, sultry, and complex. Because it reads as less biting this vintage, it's great as an aperitif on its own, but it will truly shine alongside salmon, pork chops, or spicy Thai cuisine.

Bruno Sant'Anna & Jonathan Kemp

[Pepiere "Clos des Briords" Muscadet
Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie 2021](#)

Nantais • Loire • France

[Press 4 White]

Marc Ollivier of Domaine de la Pépière has been a leading force in changing the perception of the Muscadet region one that used to be associated with mass produced, shrill white wines, and despite new terrior specific Crus similar to those of Burgundy, growers like him are still the exception.

Ollivier changed the focus of his domaine to farming and minimal intervention in the cellar, crafting age worthy Melon de Bourgogne that sparked a quality-focused revolution in his region. Marc has now retired, passing on his domaine to Rémi Branger and Gwénaëlle Croix.

The Clos des Briords bottling comes from vines planted from 1930-1950, fermented and aged in underground vats. This is still one of the finest examples of ethereal, elegant Muscadet, redolent of wet stones and seaspray, with salty lemonade vibes. There is no doubt this comes from older vines, giving it a serious, impressive mineral depth that doesn't overtake the delicate balance. This is not a powerful

wine, but nevertheless deeply evocative and hard to forget. This is not an expensive bottle, but it can still age, another example of Loire's ability to overdeliver when the wines are made with the extreme attention of someone like Marc Ollivier and his disciples. *Kirk Sutherland & Jonathan Kemp*



[Domaine du Closel 'Les Caillardières'
Savennières 2019](#)

Anjou • Loire • France

[Press 2]

Savennières is one of the great appellations for dry Chenin Blanc, especially for age-worthy versions. Words like 'majesty,' and 'monumental' are often used when describing the area, with some calling it 'the most cerebral wine in the world.' In that context, it's refreshing to hear Evelyne de Pontbriand of Domaine de Closel dial back the seriousness a bit. "Wine should taste good," she says, "but it's important for the vigneron to be happy with what he's doing. It's one thing to express a terrior or

Above L-R: Gwénaëlle Croix, Marc Ollivier, and Rémi Branger. Ollivier tirelessly worked to make Muscadet a more respected place, though it remains dominated by bulk production and is not an easy place for young, independent winemakers to establish themselves. (photo by Jules Dressner)

an appellation, it's another to express joie de vivre in what you do."

Women have been at the helm of Domaine du Closel for many years, going back to Evelyne's great aunt, who passed on the estate to Evelyne's mother Michèle in 1962. Evelyne's reign began some twenty years



ago with an immediate push to organic viticulture. They are now certified Biodynamic, and in terms of winemaking she says, "we don't do anything in the cellar!" A small amount of sulfur is used when needed but otherwise fermentations

and aging are long, slow, and largely undisturbed.

Les Caillardières is one of the best parcels in Savennières, with vines planted in the 1980s on very hard soils, mostly schist. This is a wine that could not be made anywhere else. There is an immediate sensation of rocks and stones, and while the fruit is rich and honeyed (just barely off-dry at 3.5 grams/liter), it is matched by a persistently strong mineral core, finishing with racy acidity and a deeply satisfying leesy crunch. It is a wine for your head but it will easily win your heart, too. I find that Chenins like this with a touch of sugar, just like Mosel Riesling, are one of the most age-worthy and moving white wines that exist. There are few wines that can achieve this, and it has to be a harmonious combination of nature and human stewardship.

Jonathan Kemp

Catherine and Pierre Breton 'Franc de Pied' Bourgueil 2018

Touraine • Loire • France

[Press 2]

Catherine and Pierre Breton have been worldwide pied pipers for natural wine for some time now, being certified organic in 1991, and using Biodynamic practices since 1994. Their dedication is all the more notable being in Bourgueil, which is not an easy place to work. Disease pressure, frost, and hail are constant threats, and yet they have been delivering age-worthy, joyful

Above: Evelyne de Pontbriand says of natural wine, "it should be conventional wines that mention that they use chemicals on the labels. I find it strange that we're the ones that should alert the consumer that our wines are 'pure' and 'natural' and others don't have to warn that they are 'chemical' or 'poisonous'.

wines for decades. That is not possible without raw physical exertion and an intense work ethic. Their daughter and son, France and Paul, have now taken over much of the work there.

'Franc de Pied' is an experimental plot of ungrafted Cabernet Franc vines (most vines are grafted onto American rootstock to prevent *phylloxera*) in the same sandy Galichets vineyard featured in this month's Direct Press in a version from the Breton's

neighbors Domaine de la Chevalerie. The wine offers up an entrancing, interconnected web of fresh fruit and phenolic, secondary notes: blueberries, tar, white pepper, sumac, and spicy red pepper flake. All this is constructed on top of very fine, sandy tannins. The finish is energetic, tart, and just a touch feral. A wine with lots of layers to unpack but it never strays far from a sensation of cooling, beautiful refreshment. *Jonathan Kemp*



Above: The extended Breton family. Paul (far left) and his sister France (second from left) are now building on the work their parents, Catherine and Pierre (far right), began in 1985.