

# SYLVIE & PHILIPPE CADY

## Coteaux du Layon

Loire

The banks of the little river Layon (which feeds into the Loire) have been a most fertile territory for lovers of nectarous, ageable sweet wines for several centuries, ever since the Dutch brought their appetite to bear on the fortuitously complex soils of the region. Over the years, though, the sweet wines of the Layon have never achieved the widespread notoriety of Sauternes or even of German Riesling *Beerenauslese*.

In *A Wine and Food Guide to the Loire*, Jacqueline Friedrich writes: "Now wine-lover can remain unmoved by the vineyards that stretch south and west of Angers. The majestic opening of the countryside, the great rolling hills of vines, announce an important wine region."

Beautiful the countryside may be, but as Friedrich immediately demonstrates by her enthusiasm, the scene in the glass is lovelier still: "The Layon's schistic soils give the wines a unique and thrilling mineral expression. When young, Layon is a luscious fruit salad, sometimes tasting of pineapple or banana, sometimes apricot, peach and pear, but always quince, orange, and lemon zests, the whole bound with honey. The texture is unique: at once fine and forceful, it evokes the tensile strength and exquisite delicacy of ballet as well as the durability/fragility of taffeta and silk. ... I can drink a whole bottle of wine like this - by myself."

The tiny subregions of Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume command the highest prices in the Layon. But an objective appraisal of the many young talents and viticultural microclimates of the entire region very quickly convince one that a lot of truly extraordinary wine is being made even under more generic appellations.

Early in 1997, I undertook a rather exhaustive investigation of the



Layon's best young growers. Exhaustive - and exhausting because, Ms. Friedrich notwithstanding, how would you like to taste over a hundred young wines with high acid and a hundred or more grams per liter of residual sugar in one day? (I would never come close to that in Germany, even in the "vintage of the century"!)

Cady stood out for me in a number of respects. First off, in addition to the hard schistic soil typified by their "Les Varennes" bottling, they also segregate other sites by terroir. Secondly, like all of the region's best growers, the Cadys engage in highly selective picking and separately vinify the richest and ripest of these as "Grains Nobles" (effectively *Trockenbeereenauslese*). But in their case, these wines preserve a balancing brightness, a clarity and nuance of minerality that can often be lacking in wines this sweet and rich. Lastly, this talented couple are just generous, nice folks.

From '96, I chose their "Les Varennes" from the schistic soils of Saint-Aubin. The heat of '97, at least to these taste buds, favored the chalky soil of Chaumes. While you might be tempted to drink an entire bottle yourself, not only will you be richly rewarded by sharing, you would also be well advised to experience the stamina of Chenin Blanc by "following" an open bottle for a few weeks (yes, *weeks*) in the refrigerator, jotting down your periodic taste impressions. After-ward, you can retire to write the book ... or just order some more Cady wine!

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## Coteaux du Layon St.-Aubin "Les Varennes" Coteaux du Layon Chaumes

Variety: *Chenin Blanc*

Acreage: 46 acres. An interesting mixture of calcareous, schistic and carboniferous soils on rolling hillsides west of the Layon and south of the Loire. Around 5,000 cases are bottled per year, but much of that is in merely pleasant, not outstanding dry whites and reds.

Highlights: *Intensively selective picking of botrytis fruit; impeccably pure vinification*

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"[Cady's] top cuvées are super. Favorites include a layered, delicate Les Varennes ..."

- Jacqueline Friedrich, *A Wine and Food Guide to the Loire* (1996).

"This 48-acre estate could well be the discovery of the late '90s. Philippe Cady is one of the most brilliant representatives of the new generation of winemakers in the Layon, making a succession of increasingly superb sweet wines full of botrytis flavors. In top years ... he makes enormously rich cuvées, of which Cuvée Harmonie and Cuvée Volupté are the supreme examples."

- Roger Voss, *WINE ENTHUSIAST* [5/99]

"Philippe Cady is one of the most brilliant representatives of the new guard of the Coteaux du Layon ... [Even wines from lesser vintages] offer the whole range of Coteaux-du-Layon magnificence, from marvelous perfume of apricot and exotic fruits to a truly refined texture. The prices remain especially sensible." - Betanne & Desseave,

*le Classement de 1996*