

CHÂTEAU DE VILLENEUVE

Saumur

The Saumur region provides the transition from the great Chenin Blanc plantings of the Anjou to the Sauvignon-dominated vineyards of the Touraine. And in fact, the whites can sometimes represent a blend of those two major Loire white grapes. Saumur's reputation as a wine growing region has always suffered in comparison with that of Anjou. There are no celebrated crus, no breathtaking late harvested elixirs, and in fact the majority of production has in recent times gone into sparkling wine.

Like so many Loire growing regions though, Saumur is on the march toward vinous results of memorable quality and personality, with a few visionary souls like Villeneuve's Jean-Pierre Chevallier in the lead. Here's what Jacqueline Friedrich had to say in her recent *Wine and Food Guide to the Loire*:

"Jean-Pierre Chevallier succeeded his father on the family *domaine* in 1990, though he'd been assisting since 1982. Wines from this property had always been good - particularly the singular, often breathtaking whites - but they are in the process of getting a lot better. ... Even before recent improvements, I was stunned by the Saumur blancs of this Domaine. The unique expression of *terroir*, the explosion of the gorgeous scents of a *moelleux* - of spring blossoms, ginger, honey - all the more startling because the wine was as dry and minerally as Badoit [water!]"

In his "Classification" of French vignerons, France's most noted wine critic Michel Bettane places Villeneuve in the "elite" of Saumur, extolling the balance of fruit and richness with cut and minerality.



"Excellent family domaine ... There are two cuvées of singular chenin blanc ..."

Hugh Johnson,
Modern Encyclopedia of Wine [1998]

Saumur

Saumur-Champigny

Varieties: *Chenin Blanc, Cab. Franc*

Total acreage: *12 acres, mostly planted to Cab. Franc.*

Average production: *10,000 cases.*

Vinificatory highlights: *rigorous sorting of fruit, whole-cluster pressing. Temp.-controlled fermentation in stainless steel. A small, exceptional "Les Cormiers" cuvée, inaugurated in 1995, is vinified in barrique.*