

DOMAINE DES SABLES VERTS (France, Loire, Saumur Champigny)

Caroline Meurée and Hervé Malinge took over Domaine des Sables Verts in 2019 from the previous owners, Alain & Dominique Duveau, to begin a new story, despite neither of them being from the Loire Valley. The couple met while studying in Bordeaux. Motivated and enthusiastic, the duo is prepared to spark emotions from anyone who tastes their lineup. It's a total joined effort from the vineyards to the cellar.

The vineyard is located in the village of Varrains, in the heart of Saumur Champigny and covers 16 hectares made up of mostly clay-limestone soil all across 5 communes (Varrains, Chacé, Saumur, Souzay-Champigny and Parnay). Taking on the initiative to work towards a more sustainable approach, they acquired the HVE High Environmental Value Certification (level 3) for their first vintage and are actively working to transition to organic viticulture.

Fifteen hectares are planted with Cabernet Franc (Saumur Champigny AOC) and just one with Chenin Blanc (Saumur AOC).

The total annual production averages 20 000 bottles and the rest of the fruit is sold. Basically the grapes coming from only 6 hectares are for the branded estate production.

The 33 different plots, containing vines with an average age of approximately 40 years, maintain an ecological approach based on the diversity and what is complementary of the terroirs. With each terroir made up of different soil compositions, the grapes take



on a variety of different expressions unique to their specific plots.

One surprising note to consider is the use of “green sands.” This mineral, rich in glauconite, is precious to the Saumur region and brings freshness to the Cabernet Francs.

A few meters below the surface, the cellar lays in the midst of limestone bedrock. Temperature and humidity are consistent in the heart of the underground cellars. Once harvested, the grapes are then vatted by gravity. With a minimalistic approach to their winemaking, Caroline and Hervée use very few additives--only a few

milligrams of sulfur are used to protect the juice before bottling.

Almost useless to say, Cabernet Franc is the main grape here and the brand name ‘Glouglou’ is a play on words, referring to the ‘glug glug’ sound when someone pours a

drink. Sourced from four different parcels of Cabernet Franc, the grapes for ‘Glouglou’ are hand-harvested and are then transferred into vats by gravity, where they undergo a short maceration for three days. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel and the blend is aged for a further five months in stainless steel before bottling. The wine displays enticing, fragrant notes of juicy raspberry and redcurrant fruit, with supple tannins and a crisp finish.

The couple is producing also single vineyard Cabernet Franc in limited edition. Le Poyeux is a massale selection of a 2 hectares vineyard planted in 1950, marked by low yields and deep soils.

Relegated to moderate obscurity in modern times, Cabernet Franc is in fact the proud parent of the attention-hogging Cabernet Sauvignon (after an illicit affair with Sauvignon Blanc a hundred-odd years ago).



The grapes for the Saumur Blanc come from three separate parcels. The specific plots of ‘Bonneveaux’ and ‘Elettes’, which make up about 50% of the blend, are vinified and aged for four months in used French oak barrels, with regular bâtonnage.

The other half comes from the ‘Rouères’ parcel, which is vinified in stainless steel, before the final blend is assembled and bottled in January. Characterised by layers of fresh citrus notes and ripe apricot, the wine is beautifully textured with a backbone of lively acidity.

We are delighted to be starting with the very first vintage of these wines under Caroline and Hervé.

ODE TO THE CABERNET FRANC: First and foremost, all Saumur Champigny wines are red wines. And like most wines in France, the name Saumur Champigny refers to a specific geographic location designated in 1957 gathering nine villages: Chacé, Dampierre-sur-Loire, Montsoreau, Parnay, Saumur, Saint-Cyr-en-Bourg, Souzay-Champigny, Turquant, Varrains (where Sables Verts is located).

When it comes to Saumur Champigny wines, the Cabernet Franc grape is king. In order to be classified as part of the appellation, the wine must contain at least 85% Cabernet Franc grapes. The other grapes often used for the remaining 15% in Saumur Champigny wines are Cab Sauvignon and a lesser known grape called Pineau d’Aunis.

As with many wines, the type of soil where the grapes are grown in Saumur Champigny makes a big difference in how the wines taste. There are two distinct soil types in this subregion - the rocky soil near Champigny and the ocean-influenced soil

near Saumur. The bottom line is these wines are often earthy, robust and ready to drink at a relatively young age. However, given their full-bodied flavor, it's fair to say that Saumur Champigny wines would age quite well and reveal another layer of complexity after 5 to 7 years.

This is an abstract of Eric Asimov's article published in the New York Times (Nov. 2018) *"Certain types of wine seem incapable of winning popular acceptance. Regardless of how tightly acolytes embrace the wines and the best producers, Cabernet Franc has not achieved widespread popularity beyond a small club of the committed. I feel that a touch of herbaceousness is natural in Cabernet Franc. Herbal suggestions should be embraced rather than loathed. Trying to banish them entirely can result in monolithically fruity flavors that ultimately bore."* .

We love Cabernet Franc. It can have depth and elegance with a satisfying balance of



savory and fruited notes. It's not too heavy but can certainly feel profound and soulful. It ripens earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Loire is the most exciting region for this variety and comparing the different iterations of Cab Franc from Bourgueil, Chinon and Saumur Champigny is

always fun. Elsewhere is often planted as a companion in blends in case the more fickle grape break the winemaker's heart. But in the Loire Valley it has come to its own right. It can ripen in the cool environs of the Loire river and a more recent turn to lowering yields has provided a distinct uptick in quality across the board. Also ... it won't break the bank.

The three appellations produce wines with subtle differences, though soils and winemaking play a big factor in a wine's character. Bourgueil is located on the north bank of the Loire west of Touraine and its Cab Franc is known for, generally, more tannins and a bit more muscle than Chinon, with a darker fruit profile. The region gets low rainfall and over half of the vineyards are south facing on gravel and limestone slopes, producing more serious, structured wines.

Chinon, located south of the river in the Touraine district, also produces two different styles of wines- medium bodied serious wines from the higher clay and limestone slopes and lighter, fruity wines from the sandier soils by the river bed. Chinon can be silky and seductive and commonly taste of pencil lead, raspberries, and sweet red peppers.

Saumur Champigny, south of the river and west of Chinon, is located on tuffeau plateau of high limestone and its wines are generally characterized as fruity and flirtatious, with a lighter body. █