

PRESS KIT

2012

# LES VINS DU CENTRE – LOIRE

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SANCERRE, POUILLY FUME, MENETOU-SALON,  
QUINCY, REUILLY, COTEAUX DU GIENNOIS,  
CHATEAUMEILLANT, POUILLY SUR LOIRE

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## THE VINEYARDS OF CENTRE-LOIRE

The vineyards of Centre-Loire grow on hills dominating the Loire and the Cher valleys in the "Heart of France". Grapes have been grown here for more than 2000 years. Today, the vineyards extend over 5 400 hectares giving birth to 8 Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée (A.O.C.) Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Menetou-Salon, Quincy, Reuilly, Coteaux du Giennois, Châteaumeillant and Pouilly sur Loire: each has its own personality and typicity.

The wineries of the Centre-Loire have preserved their family-owned and operated character, thus their authenticity and roots. Within this respect for tradition and the environment, the winemakers have developed their cellars and vineyards with the shared goal of achieving the very best expression of each terroir composing the vineyards of Centre-Loire.

In this landscape of gently rolling hills and plateaus sculpted by the Loire and Cher rivers grow the vineyards of the Centre-Loire. These hills and valleys which mark the region create microclimates from which spring the diversity of expression in wines from one place to another.

The climate here has a continental tendency with strong temperature variance from -1°C in winter to 26°C in summer. Total rainfall is around 600 to 800 mm annually.

### **Wines of Pleasure...**

In tasting the wines of these 7 appellations, we embark on a voyage across the different expressions of the same grape variety. Sauvignon Blanc is king in this region and reveals the diversity of the Centre-Loire terroirs. Pinot Noir is our ambassador of red wines, displaying its lightness, its red fruit aromas and lightly-spiced notes. Gamay and Pinot Gris grape varieties complete the ampelography of the region. In the heart of France, these wines form a family with the common traits of freshness, finesse and fruitiness. They are above all, Wines of Pleasure.

## THE GRAPE VARIETIES OF CENTRE-LOIRE

### **Sauvignon Blanc**

The Sauvignon, which is particularly sensitive to the quality of the terroir, achieves its more complex aromas in the vineyards of Centre-Loire. The origin of this grape variety is much debated (Centre or perhaps Southwestern France).

It presents characteristic bunches with coned-shaped, very tight berries, a thick skin, a firm and crisp flesh. It has characteristic aromas marked by the soil and the climate.

The character of wines is expressed more rapidly when they are grown on chalky soils. Marls and flinty-clay strata produce wines that need more time to develop and that are long-term cellaring wines (from 2 to 5 years or even 10 years).

The range of aromas developed in the Sauvignon wines is particularly rich and complex: the great taste of "flint" but also fruity notes (blackcurrant, passion fruits, lychee, orange, grapefruit, guava), floral notes (iris, elder, rose, acacia, linden), vegetal notes (box, broom, rhubarb, asparagus) and others such as musk or roasted meat.

The Sauvignon represents 70% of the surface areas and 75% of the production of Centre-Loire vineyards.

### **Pinot Noir**

Known in the region of Burgundy since the XIVth century, this grape variety is certainly more even older. The bunch of the Pinot Noir is small and compact (pinecone-shaped) with little tight berries (ovoid-shaped) and with a thin and smooth blue-black-colored skin.

The juice of the Pinot Noir is colorless. The maceration of the skin (that contains the colored-pigments) with the juice during the alcoholic fermentation gives the Pinot Noir its nice cherry-red color with a slightly purple tinge.

Because of its relative "fragility" it requires very specific production conditions including a climate neither too warm nor too cold and well drained soils (particularly chalky ones) in order to achieve its best expression.

For young wines, the bouquet is marked by morello cherry, violet, wood notes and with aging it is marked by aromas of game, truffle and cherries in brandy.

Grown in Centre-Loire for a very long time, the Pinot Noir now represents 20% of the area planted with vines. It is the grape variety of Sancerre, Menetou-Salon and Reuilly wines. It also enters in the blending with the Gamay of Châteaumeillant and the Coteaux du Giennois.

### **Gamay (Châteaumeillant and Coteaux du Giennois)**

Vinified into a rosé, the resulting wine is fresh and aromatic. In traditional fermentation on the skins, it yields a red wine with very ripe fruit aromas, fresh and easy to drink.

### **Pinot Gris (Reuilly)**

Vinified into a rosé, it is characterized by a pale rose color, mild aromas and astonishing finesse.

### **Chasselas (Pouilly sur Loire)**

Grape cultivated in Pouilly sur Loire in order to supply the "Halles" of Paris in the middle of XIXth century. It subsists on about 30 ha and gives a wine fresh and light.

## **THE VINE**

The vines are grown on trellises. The kind of pruning employed is the single Guyot cut which consists of leaving one cane and a renewal spur with two buds which will serve the following year for the new pruning.

The Royat cordon pruning which consists of leaving 5 renewal spurs of two buds each has returned to fashion because of its usefulness in combating wood diseases. More and more winemakers are rejecting the use of herbicides sprayed on the bare ground to prevent the sprouting of weeds and are opting instead for hoeing, plowing and new contact-type herbicides which are applied directly to the weeds. By new appellation regulations, winemakers have decided to discontinue using certain chemicals. To help in that goal, groups have formed to develop more environmentally-sound vineyard protection.

## **HARVESTS AND VINIFICATIONS**

In Centre-Loire wine harvest begins, according to the vintage, between the last week of September and the first week of October. It ends in the last two weeks of October. It starts with appellation of Quincy and Reuilly and goes on with Menetou Salon and after Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant. Date of grape harvest is determined in order to obtain ripe and healthy grapes. Average yields are between 50 and 65 hectolitres per hectare.

### **White Wines**

The harvest, as healthy and ripe as possible, is pressed as soon as the grapes arrive. The resulting must is sulphited in order to prevent oxidation problems. After a must racking of 12 to 24 hours, the must is placed into a fermentation tank where it will ferment at a temperature of 18°C. The control of fermentation temperatures has been one of the most significant developments of the last 20 years. It permits longer fermentations and gives more intense and delicate aromas. At the end of the fermentation period, a racking is made to remove the first particles of the lees. The maturing begins in the tanks in which the wine generally stays on the thin lees of fermentation. Between March and September the first vintages will be bottled, after the operations of clarification and stabilization. Some vintages will wait more than a year before being bottled and marketed.

### **Red Wines**

The healthy and ripe grapes are partially or totally de-stemmed. After having passed through the crusher, they are placed into the maceration and fermentation tanks. The maceration permits contact of the grape skins (that contain the coloring pigments) with the grape juice. To obtain a fully extracted color, a temperature of 25°C to 30°C must be reached. In the event of a cool autumn the grape harvest will be heated up in order to set off the fermentation process. Pumping and treading the must once or twice a day from the bottom to the top of the fermentation tank ensures its homogeneity and an optimum contact of the juice with the grape skins forming the cap. When the desired color and body have been obtained, the must is drawn off and pressed. A press juice and a free-run juice are obtained and put into tanks or barrels. As soon as the alcoholic fermentation is completed, the malolactic fermentation begins. This is a natural loss of acidity. Once completed, a first racking is made and a sulphite treatment will stabilize the wine. Maturing begins and many rackings will take place under the different phases of clarification. The first wines will be bottled in spring. Wines matured in oak barrels will wait one year before being bottled.

**Rosé Wines**

These wines can be obtained by two methods.

The first one consists of a straight pressing of the grapes as soon as they arrive in the cellar, just as for white wines. There will be a short time of contact between the grape juice and the skin. Consequently the color of these wines is lighter. This is called pressed rosé:

The second method consists in starting off maceration and then in racking some wine when the desired color is obtained. Consequently, it will be stronger and the wine will be full-bodied. This kind of rosé is called a bled rosé.

The following methods of vinification, i.e., maturing, stabilization and clarification, will be the same as those used for white wines.

## SANCERRE (AOC IN 1936)

Dominating the Loire from high on it's "piton" or hilltop, the vineyards of Sancerre were destined for great winemaking.

Sancerre vineyards spread through 14 villages over magnificent hills perfectly suited for the vine: well-oriented, exposed and protected with wonderful limestone and flint soils contributing to the marvelous quality of these wines. The two grape varieties that reign in Sancerre are the Sauvignon Blanc and the Pinot Noir. White wines are fresh, fine and fruity; rosés are tender and subtle, the reds aromatic and round.

### A little history...

According to legend, vines have been planted in Sancerre since ancient times. Evidence of the existence of vines in Sancerre is given by Gregory of Tours in 582 in his *Historiae Francorum*. In the 12th century, cultivation of the vine was given added impetus through the combined efforts of the Augustine monks in St-Satur and the ruling counts of Sancerre. At that time Sancerre was famous for its red wine, produced predominantly from the Pinot Noir grape, and exported from the region along the river Loire. This wine is often mentioned in accounts of life at the royal court. The famous wine of Sancerre was, in the opinion of Duke Jean de Berry, indeed the finest wine to be found in the entire kingdom. In more modern times, cultivation of the vine has undergone some major changes. The original vineyards, which were predominantly planted with Pinot vines, were destroyed by phylloxera at the end of the 19th century. Sauvignon has since become widely planted and is particularly well-suited to the local climate. The natural advantage of terroir and the skill of local producers enables the region to produce great wines and these have born the AOC status since 1936. The red and rosé wines, made from the noble Pinot Noir, followed in 1959 when they were awarded AOC accreditation.

### The Vineyard

The Sancerre vineyard extends over 2 926 ha (7 227 acres) on the left bank of the Loire into 14 villages:

Bannay	Sainte Gemme
Bué	Sancerre
Crézancy	Sury-en-Vaux
Menetou-Ratel	Thauvenay
Ménétréol	Veaugues
Montigny	Verdigny
Saint-Satur	Vinon

(To this list could also added three famous hamlets: Amigny, Chavignol and Maimbray.)

The Sancerre area is made up of many hills and valleys including the famous "piton of Sancerre" and the Loire valley. La Cuesta (356 meters altitude) is formed by layers of Jurassic superior to the west. Two geologic faults known as the Sancerre and Thauvenay faults run north-south. These faults bring into contact the subsidence layers of the Crétacé and the Eocène with Jurassic formations from the west. The intense erosion resulted in three soil types:

- "Terres blanches" or white soils, limestone-clay soils found on the westernmost hills of the Sancerre area.
- "Caillottes", pebbly-limestone soils.
- "Silex" Clay -flint soils found on the eastern slopes of the area.

## **Tasting**

Sancerre white wines, alert and full of fruit flavors, mingle mineral and citrus aromas. The attack gives way to a rich, round palate.

Red Sancerre wines illustrate the virtues of Pinot Noir, offering bouquets of cherry and morellos. On the palate, the wines are firm, full and long.

## **Some Statistics**

Total 2011 production: 176 900 hl

- Sauvignon Blanc 143 221 hl
- Pinot Noir (red) 21 008 hl
- Pinot Noir (rosé) 12 671 hl

Production Surface area: 2 894.7 ha (7 149 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 45% France, 55% export

350 winemakers, 25 wine merchant-producers, 1 cooperative

**P O U I L L Y F U M É** (or « Blanc Fumé » of Pouilly)  
**P O U I L L Y S U R L O I R E**  
**A . O . C . i n 1 9 3 7**

Located in Berry and Burgundy, in country Nivernais, the vineyard of Pouilly pride of two AOC's.

On 7 villages reign two grape varieties: the sauvignon blanc called locally Blanc Fumé and the chasselas which allow the production of AOC Pouilly sur Loire.

### **A little History...**

The vineyard of Pouilly seems to be present for the first from the V<sup>th</sup> Century.

Developed by the Monks starting from XII<sup>th</sup> century (a parcel looking at the Loire is always called "La Loge aux Moines), the vineyard will see this monastic influence increasing during the transfer of the fief of Pouilly to the Benedictins of La Charité. The opening of the canal of Briare in 1642 allows the trade of the wines towards Paris. From 1860 to 1890, the vineyard turns to the production of chasselas in table grape supplying the "Halles" of Paris thanks to the railways arrived at Pouilly in 1861. After phylloxera, the delimitation of the production area is born in 1929 and the wines resulting from the two grape varieties (white Sauvignon for Pouilly Fumé and Chasselas for Pouilly sur Loire) will obtain the AOC in 1937.

### **The Vineyard**

The Pouilly vineyard extends over 1 262 ha (3 117 acres) on the right bank of the Loire into 7 villages:

- Garchy
- Mesves sur Loire
- Pouilly sur Loire
- St Andelain
- St Laurent
- St Martin sur Nohain
- Tracy sur Loire

The oldest grounds belong to Jurassic and are old approximately 160 million years. They are marine deposits limestones in which fossils show the last life. At the end of the Cretacé, the region is subjected to a powerful erosive phase. The limestone deposits dissolve partially, giving up the residues more or less clayey (Clay-flints). An important tectonic phase then stretches Western Europe of west in is creating the ditch of the Loire. Many faults of north-western direction appear at the same time and carve the current broken relief.

We can finally distinguish on the vineyard's area 4 different types of soils:

- Limestones of Villers of Oxfordien (caillottes)
- Limestones of Barrois of Portlandien (caillottes)
- Marls with small oysters of Kimméridgien (Terres blanches)
- Clay-flints of the Cretacé (Flint)

### **Tasting**

Pouilly Fumé very often give in nose aroma of broom and grapefruit. The gun-flint is also present on the wines resulting from flint.

Wines with can be drink in their earliest youth but which present, for some vintages, very good potentials of guard.

Pouilly sur Loire are fresh, wines of thirst to the noble sense of term which give wines pleasant and easily accessible.

**Some Statistics**

Total 2011 production of Pouilly Fumé: 77 916 hl

Total 2011 production of Pouilly sur Loire: 1 731 hl

Production Surface area: 1 257 ha (3 106 acres) for Pouilly Fumé and 31 ha (76 acres) for Pouilly sur Loire

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 47,5% France, 52,5% export

130 winemakers, 10 wine merchants-producers and 1 cooperative

## MENETOU-SALON (AOC IN 1959)

The hills of the Menetou-Salon vineyards are found near the cathedral city of Bourges.

### A little history...

Menetou-Salon is an ancient vineyard according to the old writings concerning the châtelainie. We find acts from the years 1063, 1097 and 1100 in which the Lord of Menetou gave different properties to various religious orders. Most notably, he gave the vineyards located in Clos de Davet to the famous abbey of St-Sulpice-Lès-Bourges.

The history of Menetou-Salon is intimately linked with Jacques Coeur, Steward of the Royal Expenditures and Banker of the Court of King Charles VII. Jacques Coeur acquired the seigniorship of Menetou-Salon in 1450 and writings of the day relate how the wines of Menetou-Salon graced his table. It's said that Agnes Sorel, the king's favorite, would come to Menetou-Salon to rest under the ancient lime wood trees (still standing near the castle today) and enjoy the wine of Clos de la Dame.

The first wine producers' syndicate was established as early as 1890. In the 1970's, wine production was given new impetus and today vineyards cover an area of around 473 hectares (1,169 acres).

### The Vineyard

Located near Bourges, the Menetou-Salon vineyard spread through 10 villages:

Menetou-Salon	Quantilly
Aubinges	Saint-Céols
Morogues	Soulangis
Parassy	Vignoux-sous-les-Aix
Pigny	Humbligny

The vineyards are planted on limestone sediment dating to the Jurassic superior period (Kimmeridgian). The soils of the well-adapted slopes are favorable to the production of Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.

### Tasting

Menetou-Salon white wines are fresh and fruity, spicy and musky, blending citrus and floral aromas. Pepper and menthol tones are apparent in a round, full palate with good length.

The supple and perfumed reds have an attractive ruby robe. Ripe cherry or plum aromas dominate. On the palate, the reds are expressive and rich with candied fruit finish.

### Some Statistics

Total 2011 production: 28 563 hl

- Sauvignon Blanc 19 333 hl
- Pinot Noir (red) 8 081 hl
- Pinot Noir (rosé) 1 149 hl

Production Surface area: 501 ha (1 238 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 86,3% France, 13,7% export

70 winemakers and 6 wine merchants-producers

## QUINCY (AOC IN 1936)

Located in the Champagne Berrichone on the left bank of the Cher river, the Quincy vineyards grow on sand and gravel plateaus.

The Sauvignon Blanc grape reigns supreme and finds a unique expression here because of the special particularities of the local soil.

### A little history...

It is said that Quincy was originally the estate of a certain "Quintius". It is also reputed that the Biturigians Cubi, whose territory included the village of Quincy, grew vines even in that ancient time and brought them to the Biturigians Vivisci in the Bordeaux region.

Cited in the Bulle de Callixte II in 1120, Quincy is without a doubt one of the oldest vineyards of the region. The Sauvignon Blanc grape variety was brought from the "Abbaye des femmes de Beauvoir" by the monks of the Citeaux order.

The Duke Jean de Berry and Charles VII recognized the excellence of the wines and conferred the title of noble wine to the Quincy Appellation.

After the re-plantings due to phylloxera, Quincy was the first of the Centre-Loire vineyards to obtain the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) status in August 1936.

### The Vineyard

Situated to the east of Bourges, the Quincy vineyard grows along a plateau dominating the Cher Valley. The appellation zone in production comprises 254 hectares (627 acres) and extends into 2 villages: Quincy and Brinay. A small portion is located on the right bank of the Cher in an area known as Vilallin.

The vines are planted in an ancient terrace of the Cher river, made up of sand and gravel. This kind of soil warms rapidly. Three soil types are found here:

- Sandy-gravel on clay formation.
- Sandy soil and red sand formation.
- Silty-sand on sandy-clay or clay more or less sandy.

Quincy's climate is somewhat oceanic with regular seasonal rainfalls. Located in the Champagne Berrichone, it is relatively dry (<700 mm/year) and warm in summer.

### Tasting

Quincy is characterized by fresh, ripe citrus tones. Grapefruit, menthol and pepper notes, acacia and white floral aromas are also present.

### Some Statistics

Total 2011 production: 9 386 hl

Production Surface area: 261.5 ha (646 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 87.5% France, 12.5% export

25 winemakers, 1 wine merchant and 1 cooperative

## **REUILLY (AOC in 1937)**

In the heart of Berry, the Reuilly vineyard extends from the banks of the Arnon to the shores of the Cher. Given its superb well-exposed steep slopes and high quality soil and environment, Reuilly was destined to be a premier wine making region.

### **A little history...**

The origins of the Reuilly vineyards can be traced back to the early 7th century. Dagobert I, King of the Franks, gave Reuilly – its pastures, fields and vines – as a gift to the Abbey of St-Denis. The Reuilly vineyard supplied wines to the medieval towns of Bourges and Vierzon and were transported along the tributaries of the Cher to the Loire and shipped as far as England and Flanders. In 1365 the Duke of Berry, son of the King of France, issued a charter governing wine production in Reuilly.

This charter fixed the dates of harvesting and established a levy on all wines sold. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when vineyards were being replanted after the devastation caused by phylloxera, the first producers' syndicates were set up.

After the lull of the following years, winemaking in the region underwent a new revival in the 1980's.

### **The Vineyard**

The 204 hectares (504 acres) Reuilly appellation is southwest of Bourges and covers 6 villages between Indre and Cher:

- Reuilly, Diou in Indre.
- Lury-sur-Arnon, Chéry, Lazenay and Preuilly in Cher.

The vines are planted on medium steep limestone marl hillsides and on gravel and sand terraces.

The majority of wine produced here is white from Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir is used for red and rosé Reuilly. One may also find some rosé wine called "gris" produced here from Pinot Gris grapes.

### **Tasting**

Fresh and fruity, the white wines reveal floral and vegetal aromas which melt into a rich round palate.

The reds are full, fleshy and light with plenty of fruit.

The rosé's from Pinot Gris are tender and delicate with a very pale pink robe.

### **Some Statistics**

Total 2011 production: 10 900 hl

- Sauvignon Blanc 5 800 hl
- Pinot Noir (red) 2 850 hl
- Pinot Gris (rosé) 2 250 hl

Production Surface area: 209 ha (516 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 87% France, 13% export

22 winemakers and 1 wine merchant-producer

### **COTEAUX DU GIENNOIS (AOC IN 1998)**

Growing on the hills along the Loire River between Gien and Cosne-sur-Loire, this is a rapidly developing vineyard producing authentic wines revealing the originality of its terroir.

#### **A little history...**

Grape pips found in archaeological digs at Cosne-sur-Loire have been dated to the 2nd century, suggesting that vines have been planted here for a considerably long time.

In 849, King Charles "le Chauve" (the Bald), confirmed that a donation of vines and property was made by the Bishop of Auxerre to the college of the Church of Saint-Laurent in Cosne. In 1218, it was recorded that wines from the Giennois vineyards were purchased by the Royal Court of King Charles V in Paris. The castle of Cosne was built between 1254 and 1262 by the Bishop of Auxerre, and it included a vast cellar as well as vineyards. In January 1566, Charles IX and his mother, Catherine de Médicis, stopped in Cosne. Amongst the gifts they were offered were bottles of the finest local wines. The building of numerous abbeys in the region contributed greatly to the increase in the number of vineyards.

The Cistercian Abbey of Roche in Myennes and the Commandery of the Templars were particularly influential. Around this time, Coteaux du Giennois vines were also cultivated farther down the river Loire in the vineyards of the famous St-Benoit-sur-Loire Abbey and upstream on the grounds of La Charité Abbey.

#### **The Vineyard**

The Coteaux du Giennois vineyard is situated on the hillsides along the Loire River in the administrative departments of Nièvre and Loiret. The 195 hectares (481 acres) of the appellation extend into 14 communities:

Beaulieu, Bonny, Gien, Briare, Ousson, Neuvy, St Loup, Alligny, La Celle-sur-Loire, Cosne-sur-Loire, Myennes, Pougny, Saint Père.

The vines grow on flinty or limestone hills along the Loire. Some also grow on ancient terraces of the Loire in Gien. Still other vines grow on prolongations of the geological formations of Sancerre and Pouilly; mainly limestone east of the Cosne fault and flint to the west.

#### **Tasting**

The white wines have mineral tones with quince and white flower notes. Very good expression of Sauvignon Blanc with excellent freshness.

The reds are a Pinot Noir and Gamay blend, fine and fruity, with red fruit and pepper notes. The aromatic side of Pinot Noir and the vivacity of Gamay balance each other wonderfully.

The rosés, fine and delicate, have light pepper accents and exhibit aromas of vineyard peaches.

#### **Some Statistics**

Total 2011 production: 9 396 hl

- Sauvignon Blanc 5 172 hl
- Red 3 061 hl
- Rosé 1 163 hl

Production Surface area: 202 ha (499 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 85% France, 15% export

40 winemakers and 1 cooperative

## CHATEAUMEILLANT (AOC IN 2010)

Located south of Bourges, this ancient vineyard produces red and rosé wines from very unique soils.

### A little history...

The origin of the Châteaumeillant vineyard can be traced back to the 5th century. Châteaumeillant was the Meylan of the Biturigians and home to the Biturican vines, the Médiolanum (the Roman name for Milan) of Peutinger, an important road junction between Rome and Gaul and a major storing ground for amphorae. Gregory of Tours confirms the existence of vines in this region in his *Historiae Francorum* of 582.

Between 1220 and 1275, a series of charters were issued relating to the means of production of quality wines and the labor which was enlisted under feudal rule, known as the "corvée". Amongst the governing principles established under these charters was the principle of the "ban des vendanges" or the announcement of the official start of harvesting, which exists even today.

In 1773, new vine stocks were brought from Lyons. By 1830, Gamay, the native variety of Beaujolais, had become the most widely planted vine in this area.

Châteaumeillant is especially renowned for its "vin gris", or grey wine, which is produced by pressing the Gamay grapes immediately after harvesting.

The wines of Châteaumeillant were awarded the AOC quality status in 2010.

### The Vineyard

The Châteaumeillant appellation is just 90 hectares (222 acres) and is located in the communities of:

- Chateaumeillant, Reigny, Saint Maur and Vesdun in the Cher administrative department.
- Champillet, Feusilles, Néret and Urciers in the Indre administrative department.

The vines are planted on siliceous soils, mostly sandy and sandy-clay. The sub-soils are composed primarily of sandstone, micaschist and gneiss.

### Tasting

The reds combine aromas of ripe fruit with a full mouth for a finish on fine peppery notes. The rosés, called "gris", present a freshness and fruitiness that is very original. White fruits and vineyard peach lead to more sweet notes. Fresh and lively on the palate, these are excellent summer wines.

### Some Statistics

Total 2011 production: 3 596 hl

- Red 2 754 hl
- Rosé 842 hl

Production Surface area: 95 ha (235 acres)

Percentage (by volume) of sales: 98,5% France, 1,5% export

7 winemakers and 1 cooperative

## APPENDIX I

### CENTRE-LOIRE WINE STATISTICS

Total surface area of Centre-Loire vineyards (in production in 2011): 5 450 ha (13 467 acres)

- Sauvignon Blanc: 4 342 ha (10 729 acres)
- Pinot noir and Gamay (red): 768 ha (1 898 acres)
- Pinot noir, Gamay and Pinot gris (rosé): 340 ha (840 acres)

Average yield in 2011: 24.2hl/ha to 62,1 hl/ha

**8 Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée (A.O.C.):** Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Menetou-Salon, Quincy, Reuilly, Coteaux du Giennois, Châteaumeillant et Pouilly sur Loire.

660 declared winegrowers

370 wineries selling in bottles

33 wine merchant-winemakers

5 cooperatives

Total turnover of Centre-Loire wines in 2010-2011: 140 million euros

Total production of Centre-Loire wines in 2011: 318 388 hl

- White : 262 559 hl
- Red : 37 754 hl
- Rosé : 18 075 hl

Percentage (by volume) of sales in 2010-2011: 55% France, 45% export

### THE FRENCH MARKET

Sales on the French market in 2010-2011:

Value: 76 million euros

Volume: 157 300 hl

Commercialization of Centre-Loire wines in the French market by volume:

Supermarkets: 15%

Restaurants: 25%

Wineshops: 30%

Private customers: 30%

Evolution of sales in France by volume in 2009-2010: + 5%

### **EXPORT MARKET**

Export sales by value and volume in 2010-2011

Value: 64 million euros

Volume: 128,700 hl

Evolution by volume 2009-2010: + 12 %

#### Importing countries of Centre-Loire wines

	White	Rose	Red	Total	%
Great Britain	28 514	1 988	279	30 782	26,7%
USA	19 725	795	472	20 994	18,1%
Belgium	15 493	514	1 391	17 398	15,1%
Germany	10 567	968	76	11 612	10,1%
Netherlands	6 676	228	152	7 057	6,1%
Norway	4 009	551	31	4 591	3,9%
Canada	3 627	35	101	3 763	3,2%
Sweden	2 447	157	23	2 627	2,3%
Ireland	2 473	15	23	2 511	2,1%
Switzerland	2 241	7	46	2 295	2,0%
Danemark	1 363	149	33	1 545	1,3%
Japan	1 340	9	99	1 447	1,2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106 276</b>	<b>5 907</b>	<b>3 226</b>	<b>115 410</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

## APPENDIX II

### VINTAGES OF CENTRE-LOIRE WINES

#### **2011 IN CENTRE-LOIRE: Unusual and unpredictable weather for our classic wines**

Weather in spring, autumn weather in summer: an extraordinary set of weather patterns shaped the 2011 winegrowing season. In April and May the vines experienced unusually rapid growth which continued right up until flowering; then things settled down again, and normal growth and ripening patterns resumed. 2011 is bound to go down as one of the earliest vintages since the famous harvest of 1893. Despite the weather, the wines are just as we had hoped and expected: full and supple on the palate with the classic Loire freshness, well-defined flavours and the potential to broaden out and develop over the next few months.

#### **In the Vineyard**

Temperatures were mild towards the end of winter and bud-break came early, around the first week in April. A very warm, dry spring (2.7°C above average in April and May, rainfall down by 65%) caused an almost unprecedented rate of growth; each new phase followed the last at a frenzied pace, leaving only 53 days between bud break and flowering instead of the average 65. Flowering itself was rapid, three weeks ahead of schedule and was over by the end of May.

And then everything changed. Temperatures fell, especially between July 14th and August 15th. It became more humid; and not a moment too soon for the grapes on which the frenetic pace was starting to take its toll. The vines recovered well, took up the moisture they needed and quickly got back to normal. The temperature rose again during the ripening stage; pockets of thundery rain sped up ripening but had a negative effect on plant health in certain places.

Apart from the hailstorms which caused some severe damage in part of the Quincy vineyard on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the weather was not quite so unkind at harvest time. Mildew and oidium, the two main vine diseases, were relatively superficial, and little remedial intervention was needed.

#### **Ripening**

Early development and healthy foliage were among the first indicators of a high quality vintage. Despite rapid development in most areas, the ripening phase was slow. Patience definitely proved to be a virtue this year: in addition to monitoring the sugar-to-acidity balance which quickly reached the required levels, wine growers were well advised to taste the berries to assess flavour ripeness. Delaying in this way was a feasible option as the grapes were generally in good health, except for the 10% or so of parcels where botrytis made a worrying appearance. Where grape health was compromised, débourage (whites) and painstaking *tri* (hand picking) for the reds helped to “clean up” the harvest and maintain a high level of quality.

The grapes began to show good levels of sugar (but not excessive, as in 2009) alongside relatively low acidity. Thanks to mild temperatures and an often overcast sky, freshness of flavour has not been compromised.

#### **The Harvest**

Harvesting was staggered over almost a month, and the weather was kind throughout. The terroirs which had suffered from lack of water during June and July were the first to be

ready; the first grapes were picked from August 29<sup>th</sup> onwards, in Sancerre for whites and Pinot Noir in Reuilly for reds. Reds and whites were harvested simultaneously. In the Central Loire most were harvested between 5<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September with the last crops coming in on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Never before has a harvest been over before the end of summer; not even 2003 and 1976 were quite this early.

### **2011 Vintage: First Impressions**

Whites are soft and mellow with a lovely natural sweetness. They are beautifully rounded, and despite reduced acidity, freshness and balance are good. Flavours are already intense and elegant, but will open up more over the next couple of months. White flowers and fruit are the dominant flavours (citrus and white-fleshed fruit) with vegetal and spicy notes.

Reds are showing a vibrant, intense colour. They are well-rounded on the attack with expressive flavours of fruit (morello cherries) and flowers (peonies). Tannins are well-balanced and even, often a touch firm on the finish, but this will mellow over time and meld with the softness already apparent on the mid-palate.

## **2010 IN CENTRE-LOIRE: A GREAT CLASSIC**

The moderately dry climate was marked during the vegetative season by alternating hot and cold spells. Thus the maturation, like all the phases – budburst, flowering and veraison – started slowly and finished in optimal climatic conditions. A beautiful balance on the palate associating fullness and freshness characterized by superb aromas of fruit in white as well as red, 2010 is a great classic.

### **Viticultural Campaign**

After a relatively slow budburst, flowering spread over a three week period. Low temperatures in May and early June provoked flower abortion in numerous areas, especially for the whites. The last ten days of June and all of July were particularly hot (2°C above normal) which permitted tardy plants to catch up time to the closing of the grape bunch. Then once again, a cold spell interspaced with some fair weather days arrived in August and September which made the veraison long and marked by a certain heterogeneity. Rainfall was down 15% throughout the vegetative period. An episode of hail affected part of the Châteaumeillant vineyard; the other Centre-Loire vineyards did not suffer any significant damage.

Pressure from cryptogamic diseases was less than in previous years. Mildew appeared late while odium was a bit more virulent. The relative dryness in the deep soil maintained the healthy state and continued right up to the harvest. Concern was more focused on diseases of the wood (esca, black dead arm) symptoms of which were seen in high proportions (as much as 15% of the plants affected in certain parcels).

### **Maturation**

Slow in the first phase, maturation gradually accelerated thanks to gentle rain showers and periods of warmer than usual temperatures. The last week was revealed to be of capital importance for the quality of the vintage. In particular, the slightly high acidities were rebalanced by the loss in malic acid while the impressive increase in sugar levels exceeded winemakers' hopes. The warm nights and sunny days, warm but not excessively hot, refined the maturity of the aromas.

## **Harvest**

The majority of vineyards (Sancerre, Pouilly, Coteaux du Giennois, Châteaumeillant) opened the harvest on 27 September. Reuilly and Quincy began on 20 September and Menetou-Salon started on 29 September. The harvest reflected the differences in the flowering dates and most harvesting was finished on 15 October with the very last finishing on 19 October. Harvesting was carried out under sunny skies except for the heavy rain of 4 October which allowed the maturation of late parcels. In general, the reds were picked in the first half of the harvest except for some which obtained very good results by delaying picking until the end and employing rigorous sorting.

## **First Impression of the Vintage**

The whites exhale all the richness and aromatic finesse of sauvignon according to its origins (soil type, exposure). The astonishing fruitiness of the musts can be seen in the wines: exotic fruits (passion, mango), gun flint, boxwood and other vegetal nuances (rhubarb, pea, asparagus). Ample and well balanced. Supported by a good vivacity, they affirm a presence, firmness and a remarkable length on the palate. Their aging potential is certain and many will only obtain their full expression after 12 to 18 months of aging.

The reds are seductive by their intense fruitiness (strawberry, raspberry, black currant, blackberry). On the mouth, the attack is firm. Tannins are austere, sometimes vigorous, well supported by fatness, conferring solidity and length to the structure. The malolactic fermentation will bring roundness. More elegant than powerful, they will be ready rather soon (end of 2011) but the denser cuvees will also be suitable for additional bottle aging.

## **2009 in Centre – Loire: A Rich and Generous Vintage**

August and September's ideal weather and a limited yield make 2009 an exceptional vintage: these wines with their fresh, refined aromas and powerful palate, exhibit the remarkable natural richness of the grapes.

## **The Viticultural Season**

The principal vegetative stages (budburst, flowering, veraison, maturity) occurred up to 2 days earlier than the average of the last fifteen years.

Following a relatively cold and dry winter, April began with three weeks of temperatures 3°C higher than the norm. May was also warm. June and July were normal for the season while higher than usual temperatures appeared again in mid-August. While not excessive, precipitation often arrived in the form of thunderstorms leaving 20 mm to 30 mm of rain which broke the dry spells. Unfortunately, hail accompanied all of the storms and devastated certain areas on 7 March and 16 July. The vineyards of Menetou-Salon, southwestern Sancerre area, northern parts of Pouilly-Fumé and the vineyards of the Coteaux du Giennois situated in the Nièvre administrative department were particularly affected. The regular watering maintained the humidity of the soil at a sufficient level until the veraison. A dry period progressively arrived becoming more pronounced at the end of the harvest.

Mildew was a constant threat and remained a concern throughout the season. The dry months of August and September preserved the excellent sanitary state of the crop.

Overall, the yields were among the lowest seen in recent years.

### **Ripening**

Sugar levels progressed very rapidly and attained particularly high levels; one must go back to the famous 1947 vintage to find such high concentrations thorough the entire crop. Acidity levels remained in place primarily thanks to cool nights during the first half of September and the dry period. Only a few cuvees picked at the very end of the harvest lacked a little acidity. These conditions also helped maintain the fleshy texture of the berries, a characteristic that we generally find in the wines.

### **The Harvest**

The start of harvesting was spread over two weeks. Reuilly and Quincy were first starting between 12 and 15 September. Next was Pouilly-sur-Loire beginning on 16 September, then Sancerre, Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant from the 21<sup>st</sup> and finally Menetou- Salon on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month. Most grapes were harvested between 25 September and 3 October. The last were picked on 12 October.

With the balance between the sugars and acidities being obtained in all cases, the principal deciding factor as to when to pick each parcel became the aromatic maturity for the whites and the phenolic maturity for the reds. This decision was made even more comfortable for the winemakers because of a stable high pressure zone that had moved into the area and maintained the dry weather.

### **First Impressions**

A strong constitution and vinosity characterize the wines of this vintage, a vintage for the record books.

The whites display sober aromas and a great finesse. Fruity notes (white fruits and tropical fruits for example) dominate. Floral and mineral nuances, sometimes with light vegetal notes, add to this lovely olfactory freshness. The mouth is generous: a harmonious attack, then rich and fleshy, even warm, finishing on a lively balance.

The reds, with a deep ruby robe often with violet highlights, reveal concentration. Red fruits and spicy notes mark the nose. Tannins are tender in wines from chalk soils or wines with light extractions while the wines from chalky-clay and flinty-clay soils, or from more prolonged macerations, are austere. Full-bodied and solid, these are wines for aging.

## **2008 in Centre-Loire - A Vintage from Shadow to Light**

One of the least early harvests of the last ten years, 2008 is providing fruity wines, lively and fleshy thanks to a cool but dry summer and a superb end of season.

### **The Viticultural Season**

The vegetative cycle started in the hot month of May. Temperatures then descended, on the whole, to lower than usual for the period. Spring brought plenty of rain. Beginning with the formation of the grapes in late June, the rain showers became more regular yet lighter.

In addition, dates of the vine's principal vegetative phases were similar to the 1980s: budburst around 25 April followed by regular and uninterrupted growth, flowering on 20 June and lasting for 3 days, change of color of the grape berries between 20 and 25 August. Thanks to inspection and control methods (including the use of reference parcels and modeling) mildew, while virulent, was well controled and the average number of interventions were reduced.

### **Ripening**

The ripening period occurred during a rare and beneficial dry spell.

During the first phase, it was very slow then suddenly accelerated with the arrival of fog and mist beginning in October. The grapes were rich in sugar with some concentrations attaining very high levels.

Cold nights prevented excessive degradation of malic acid and permitted a favorable evolution of aromas in the white and red while also reinforcing the accumulation of color in the reds.

### **The Harvest**

Harvesting began first in Reuilly on 22 September then in Quincy on 29 September and from 2 October in Sancerre, Pouilly-sur-Loire, Menetou-Salon, Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant.

The majority of grapes were harvested between 6 and 15 October and the last around 20 October. The whites were generally harvested before the reds.

Once again, one can recognize the winemakers' wisdom in knowing when to harvest each parcel at its optimum ripeness.

### **First Impressions of the Vintage**

Distinguished by their aromas, the wines have a lot of presence on the palate. They show volume and power. Their potential for evolution is very good.

Again this year, the whites are very aromatic displaying the full range depending on their terroirs. Fruity and floral aromas mix with discrete vegetal notes displaying great finesse. With a frank acidity, they display a gustatory balance based on firmness. Thanks to the richness of the grapes, this vivacity is harmoniously balanced by a sucrosity and richness that fills the mouth.

In the red wines, we find aromas of red fruits (particularly cherry which was already noticeable in the must) completed by spicy notes. Their robes are beautifully deep ruby red with varying degrees of violet tints. Tannins are good quality: measured when the extractions were light for the wines to be consumed first, while for the grand cuvees reds, a prolonged maceration led to denser tannins.

### **2007 in Centre-Loire - Aromas and Firmness for a Vintage Miraculously Saved**

Warm spring – cool and rainy summer, these inverted seasons marked this year's climate. Fortunately, during the all-important late summer period, nature presented a gift of 29 miraculous days to ripen the grapes.

### **The Viticultural Season**

A memorably warm month of April then the months of May and June warmer and wetter than average; a cool and damp early and mid-summer followed by a dry late summer with moderate temperatures. This is the climate that has made the 2007 vintage.

Until the end of August, worried winemakers surveyed their vineyards. After an early budburst, the risk of frost became a serious concern. Work in the vineyard needed to be performed quickly due to the rapid growth of the vines which were already three weeks in advance by the beginning of June. The threat of cryptogamic diseases such as mildew and rot required total vigilance and they were well-controlled overall and qualitatively inconsequential for the rare parcels that were affected.

The fear of a difficult ripening was the main topic of conversation in the first days following the *véraison* (change of color of the grapes). Then starting 24 August, just what

everyone was hoping for arrived: a dry and cold north wind blew in to dry and clean up the soil and vines. This was followed by warmer days and cool nights and mornings with abundant dew.

### **Ripening**

In these conditions, sugar production was accelerated and the degradation of acids was slowed. The assimilation of water by the berries having been well-regulated by the drying of the air and the soil, the phenomenon of concentration appeared in certain parcels. This became widespread in the red grapes in the beginning of September which intensified color and quality of tannins.

The aromas of the white grapes were slowly developed during the ripening stage which was long despite the precocity of the year.

### **The Harvest**

The harvest period began between 3 and 13 September, but the parcels were picked as the grapes became ready over the span of a month. The red grapes were picked first. The white grapes were harvested during the last three weeks of September and beginning of October. This particularly long period reflects the flowering periods which were spread out until maturity and the wisdom of the winemakers who patiently waited for the optimum moment to harvest.

### **First Impressions**

Wines from 2008 have good typicity, they are lively with expressive aromas. In whites as well as reds, potential for aging appears excellent.

The whites exhale a palette of intense aromas as varied as the diversity of their terroirs. Floral aromas dominate accompanied by fruity, vegetal or mineral notes depending on their origins. The balance in the mouth is characterized by a very present acidity which, combined with the potential provided by the grapes' natural richness in sugar, yields wines that are simultaneously full and firm.

In the reds, with their ruby-red colors, we rediscover the beautiful fruity aromas of the freshly harvested parcels. Their tannins are supple and often concentrated.

## **2006 in the Centre-Loire: Bounty and Elegance**

At the end of a hot and dry year marked by large climatic variations, the vines produced grapes of excellent qualitative potential. The key to success in 2006 was to harvest quickly.

### **Climatic fluctuations...**

After a dry winter, the vine's vegetative cycle began with welcome humidity; March and May were particularly wet. This created water reserves in the surface soil levels that were to prove very useful.

Indeed, June and July were very hot and dry: +2°C for June, +5°C for July compared to the seasonal average. These conditions suited vines in which the development was already two weeks early. Only young vines 4 to 6 years-old on fragile soils suffered stress from lack of water.

In August, temperatures -3°C lower than the seasonal average arrived at the right moment allowing the plants to recover and the rainfall, normal for the month, was enough to prevent the arresting of maturation.

Finally, September (which was +2.5°C above the seasonal average) arrived with two weeks of very hot temperatures and no water which was compensated by a large storm on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The second half of the month was mild with a few light scattered showers.

Vine diseases were not very serious throughout the season and easy to contain. For this reasons the grapes were in excellent condition.

### **...Favorable for maturation**

Sugar levels rose while acids remained balanced. The level of alcoholic potential rose rapidly until 14 September then assumed a normal rhythm. Acidity and pH levels remained good thanks to the stability of the tartaric acid throughout the maturation.

Cloudy skies beginning in mid-September permitted the preservation of aromatic intensity and freshness.

### **Rapid harvests**

Thanks to the performance of wine estates' equipment, the grapes were harvested in record time. Picking was concentrated during the optimum period of 10 – 12 days: any sooner and the grapes would have been insufficiently ripe and later they would have begun deteriorating. The official harvest period was announced for 11 September for Reuilly, 13 September for Pouilly-sur-Loire and Quincy, 15 September for Sancerre and Menetou-Salon, 16 September for the Coteaux du Giennois. Harvesting had started in all the vineyards with the addition of picking in Châteaumeillant on 18 September. Harvesting began with the white grapes. Taking advantage of the excellent sanitary condition of the grapes, most winemakers harvested the red grapes last.

### **First impressions of the vintage**

The cuvées having finished their alcoholic fermentation offer some first indications of the style of this year's vintage.

Aromatic elegance and correct balance between fullness and freshness globally characterize the 2006 wines.

The whites release intense, clean aromas. Very ripe, they are simultaneously rich and fine. Floral and fruity notes are very present. The mouth is full, opulent and vivacious.

The reds, ruby to purple in color, display a pleasant fruitiness both in intensity as well as in complexity. Tannins are well-structured, balanced and very fleshy.

## **2005 in Centre -Loire: Gifts from the Sky**

A remarkable grape quality has made 2005 an extraordinary vintage. Nature's elements came together during the season to yield this cru which is already considered among one of the finest.

### **A Climate for Vines...**

Generally warm and dry, the season was punctuated by alternating hot and cool periods. Well adapted to the vine's cycle and the grape's needs, this climate was nearly ideal.

The very hot temperatures encouraged a rapid development of the vegetative cycle through the end of July, then a cooler month of August allowed the vines to recover and begin the maturation phase. The low amount of precipitation, regular and moderate, provoked an early stop of the vegetative growth. All these conditions contributed to foliage in a perfect functioning state right through to maturity as well as an excellent sanitary state of the crop.

### **...and For Ripening of Grapes**

The healthy condition of the vines combined with a particularly favorable climate to produce a large sugar content. The moderate temperatures had a very positive affect. Acidity is balanced and remained stable to the end of the harvest. Aromatic potential, especially for the Blancs, developed slowly and completely. Coloring for the Rouges accumulated favorably with strong skin coloration and ripe tannins.

### **Early Harvest**

Winemakers approached the harvest confident in the knowledge that the dry soil and absence of a rot threat permitted them to pick each parcel at the moment of optimum ripeness.

Picking began in fair weather practically “without a drop of rain”. The first grapes were harvested in Sancerre beginning 7 September for some parcels of early-ripened Blanc. Harvesting started for Reuilly on 9 September, 10 September for Quincy, 15 September for Pouilly-sur-Loire and Châteaumeillant, 16 September for Menetou-Salon and 17 September for Sancerre and the Coteaux du Giennois.

In general, the Blancs were harvested first and the Rouges were harvested afterward.

### **First Impressions of the Vintage**

For both White and red wines, aromatic elegance, power and volume are discernable in the first tastings.

The white wines express superb aromas, intense and with great finesse. While fermenting, notes of fruits (white fruits, tropical fruits) are dominant. Minerality and some vegetal (liquorice) touches are also perceptible. The mouth is rich and round and well supported by a degree of firmness. The finish is persistent.

The red wines are a deeply colored, beautifully ruby – violet. The nose evokes very ripe red fruits (raspberries, blackberries). The gustative structure is ample and full of firm tannins (for wines from siliceous or clay soils) and silky (for wines from chalky limestone soils).

## **2004 in the Centre Loire: The Rewards of a Well-Tended Vineyard**

After the unusual heat wave of 2003, we return to aromatic and fresh wines in 2004. All the winemakers’ work and *savoir-faire* have been essential for the success of this vintage which required sacrificing part of the bountiful harvest to conserve the very best part and a vinification demanding all the winemakers’ experience and oenological know-how.

### **The Year in the Vineyard**

The vine growth cycle was relatively late – about 8 days late compared to the last 20 years. Nighttime temperatures were normal but daytime temperatures were often below average, thus explaining the slow vegetative cycle.

The season began calmly and was relatively dry with a virtual lack of vine diseases. Beginning in mid-July, the climate became more humid, often with thunderstorms. Fungi, like mildew and oidium, started to become a threat and required close vineyard monitoring.

Grape maturation began with a very hot first half of September with maximum temperatures of 25° - 30°C (77° - 86°F) which accelerated grape development. Then sugar accumulation returned to its usual pattern and the reduction of acidity slowed.

### **The Harvest**

Conscious of the importance of the harvest date and despite the advancement of the season, winemakers wisely exercised patience and waited for full maturity. By being willing to assume the risk of losing part of the harvest, they succeeded in optimizing the quality of the grapes. Picking began around September 20 in Reully and in Quincy, then between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of October for the other appellations (Sancerre, Menetou-Salon, Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant).

Harvesting continued throughout October with, in most of the appellations, short interruptions to wait a few days in order to achieve the best maturity for each parcel. In addition, the vast majority of grapes were picked and brought in under the best conditions and lower acidity toward the end of the season compensated for some of the higher levels of acidity at the season's beginning.

Vital for quality in 2004: elimination of surplus grapes during the year, notably for red, careful sorting at harvest, and selective pressings for the white. 2004 is a vintage that has required a great deal of attention throughout the year both in the vineyard and in the cellar.

### **First Impressions of the Vintage**

The whites have returned to their classic style. Aromas are particularly expressive and fine. While fruity and floral aromas dominate, vegetal notes are also perceptible. Gustatory balance is fresh and lively, even nervy. They will be excellent while young yet also show signs of good cellaring potential.

The reds are well-colored; ruby-red with violet tints. Fruity aromas of raspberries and black currants are often present. Tannins are supple for the wines to be consumed first (after aging 12 to 18 months), but are solid in the *cuvées* suitable for extended aging

## **2003 IN CENTRE-LOIRE: A Very Special Vintage**

### **Unusually Hot**

First and foremost, 2003 has been a very hot year; even the most elderly winemakers cannot remember a comparable year, a fact confirmed by the meteorologists. During the vines vegetative cycle from 1 April to 30 September, the average temperature was more than 2.5°C above normal. For long periods (the second half of April, all of June, 10 to 25 July and the first half of August), temperatures were 4°C to 10°C above normal.

These high temperatures have had a favorable influence on quality. Quantitatively however, parcels of young vines suffered burned leaves and grapes sometimes resulting in significant losses.

Yet 2003 was not a year of excessive drought: timely rain in the appellations (from 30 June to 4 July and 17 August) provided sufficient watering of the vines for the qualitative evolution of the grapes.

Grapes ripened nearly 3 weeks in advance.

### **Ideal Ripening Conditions**

Our typical September weather pattern began in late August: cool nights, morning dew and warm afternoons. The ripening process slowed to a normal rate exercising a very positive effect on quality.

Sugar levels continued to climb right through the harvest, often achieving concentrations rarely obtained in our vineyards. Acidity, which was low at the beginning, stabilized at lower levels than those of recent years but without compromising the wines' balance.

These conditions were beneficial for aroma development in the white wines and color formation and good tannins in the reds.

### **More Sun for the Harvest**

Starting 19 August in Reuilly, the harvest period (for the most part) was the first three weeks of September: Quincy from the first days of September, followed by Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant, then Sancerre and Menetou-Salon where the last grapes were harvested on 25 September.

Harvesting took place under sunny skies. Grapes had beautiful coloring – golden Sauvignon Blanc, red grape varieties were quite dark – and the grapes displayed perfect health.

### **The Wines: First Impressions**

Marked by the sun, the 2003 wines can sometimes be surprising. The wines made from the very ripest grapes recall the styles of memorable years such as 1959 or 1947.

### **White wines**

They reveal wonderful aromas that express themselves with reserve, yet affirm their great delicacy and should hold up well over time. The mouth is supple in contrast to the vivacity of recent vintages. Wines made from grapes harvested at extreme maturity are rich, full on the palate and fleshy; the alcohol compensating for the low acidity.

### **Red wines**

They show superb robes with deep ruby-violet colors. Full-bodied, their tannins are robust and some are already revealing mellow tones. Aromas are of very ripe fruits, sometimes mingling fragrances of stewed fruits and spices.

The 2003 vintage will be easy to appreciate soon and some of the finest red and white cuvees should have exceptional cellaring potential.

## **2002 in Centre-Loire: Power and Delicacy**

The spring frosts didn't affect our region. The most sensitive vineyard (as Quincy) are now protected "colienne" system.

The flowering was extremely fast during a really hot weather period who gave problems of abortion.

The hot temperatures of August week of 15<sup>th</sup> gave an homogeneous and fast berry color change (ripening).

Some storms with little hail appeared in May and July in Sancerre and Menetou-Salon but don't cause big troubles.

### **Harvest time**

The harvest lasted from september 16<sup>th</sup> to october 15<sup>th</sup> with a dry and cool weather.

The dry weather of september with cold nights and nice days, the reasonable yields allowed very healthy grapes for reds and whites.

The principal harvest took place between september 25<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup>. The study of skin and aromas give the opportunity for wine makers to choose the right day to pick up the best grapes.

### **White wines**

Whites wine marry power and delicacy. The aromas of white peaches, mint, grapefruit give a very fresh mouth with long length in mouth.

**Red wines**

The colour is intense with some purple brightnesses. Tannins are strong but balanced. The noses are full of red fruits. The aging potential is going to be very good.

**2001 – A Vintage of Patience**

Patience, because to succeed it was necessary to wait for the fair weather which arrived in the last weeks of the maturation and to take the time necessary to eliminate the inferior quality grapes.

Patience, because to fully appreciate these wines you mustn't hurry – their evolution will be slow. Their lively structure is a harbinger of their aging ability and longevity.

**The Year in the Vineyard**

The mild winter favored an early budburst in mid-April. The flowering was from 10 to 25 June, which is normal for our vineyards. The vegetative season was more humid than in recent years.

The threat of mildew, principal problem for vines, was very strong throughout the season and required constant vigilance.

The climate of 2001 divided the maturation into two phases.

First, September's cool temperatures slowed the gain in sugars and the loss of acidity which prompted the wise decision to delay the date of harvest by about ten days in order to obtain good maturity.

Then the first couple of weeks of October brought warm weather – day and night – and rapidly accelerated the ripening of the grapes: strong rise in sugars, balancing of acids, refining of aromas of the Sauvignon and accumulation of coloration in the reds.

**The Harvest**

Returning to more normal harvest dates, the first grapes were harvested around 25 September in Reully and Quincy; Menetou-Salon and Sancerre began harvesting in October.

The reds were harvested first with strict sorting, both in the vineyards and in the wineries, in order to eliminate unripe or otherwise inferior grapes.

The harvest of white grapes started soon after and many winemakers, encouraged by the continuing fair weather, chose to wait as long as possible before harvesting – some waited up to 15 October. They were well rewarded; the last grapes harvested were the finest quality.

**White wines**

They present pleasant aromas – nuanced and varied: fruity (white fruits), floral (rose), minerals and varietals (grapefruit, blackcurrants). Their vivacity indicates wines that will only find their true expression after several months of ripening.

**Red wines**

With intense to average coloration, express classic odors of cherries and redcurrant. The tannins are more or less pronounced according to the length of their vatting. They will require aging of at least 6 months to 1 year.