

## **The Loire Valley is known for its Sauvignon Blanc, but Chenin Blanc Production is Also Fantastic**

Sauvignon Blanc production throughout the Loire holds no higher regard than that which is produced within Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé. Pouilly-Fumé is not only known for its citrus and tree fruit flavors in their Sauv's, but it's also known for its characteristic fog that occurs in the mornings over Spring, Summer and Fall plantings.

The Loire Valley is also well known for producing premium quality Chenin Blanc. Some of the best in the world — although new world regions within South Africa are becoming very competitive.

While there are a number of sub-appellations that produce Chenin Blanc in the Loire, it's probably both Touraine and Vouvray AC that are the most noteworthy currently.

In Touraine, Chenin Blanc is traditionally medium-bodied, un-oaked and off-dry. Fruit flavors vary, but expect predominant tones of tree, citrus and tropic fruit touches with some herbal tones.

Heading Northeast slightly, we land in Vouvray. It's here where Chenin Blanc styles are even more varied. Premium quality dry, medium and even sweet Chenin Blanc is produced throughout the entire appellation.

## **The Loire's Cool Climate is Key to the Success of its Wine**

The Loire River runs through much of the heart of the Loire Valley and offers the wines of the region a uniquely flavored minerality. It stretches for more than 629 miles and is the longest river in France.

Given the unique relatively Northerly location of the Loire Valley, in addition to the substance and vitality afforded by the Loire River, the climate throughout the region is conducive to producing beautifully refined and concentrated Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc and regional plots of Chardonnay.

The climate, in conjunction to its soil composition, allows grapes the ability to ripen slowly, uniformly and efficiently, thus enhancing the ultimate flavor and aromatic concentration of wines produced throughout the region.

## **There Are Over 87 Sub-appellations Within the Loire Valley**

It's a pretty big place, and each sub-appellation is unique in its own right and produces different styles of wine that resemble its terroir. The Loire is essentially divided into 4 different regional territories — **Pays Nantais, Anjou, Touraine and Centre.**

Within each of these 4 regions, a much larger number of sub-appellations exists.

Below are some of the major and most beautiful wine production regions throughout the Loire:

## *Touraine*

Touraine, which also encompasses the sub-sub-appellation of Vouvray AC, is perhaps best known for its Chenin Blanc production. Chenin Blanc in Touraine is known to locals as Pineau Blanc de la Loire. Sauvignon Blanc is also produced here and sometimes blended. The region has been an official AOC since 1939 and also produces a variety of red wines (especially Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Gamay within its first year), known to be grippingly tannic. Rosé wines are also produced.

## *Vouvray*

This is one of the neatest regions to discuss when it comes to white wine. Why? Well, Vouvray is laser-focused on producing Chenin Blanc. But it's not just the focus on the Blanc that makes it worth discussing. It's the traditionally high-acidity that's present in most Vouvray wines. In some cases, Chenin Blanc from Vouvray has been known to age as long as 100 years. The acidity is so conducive to aging that this special white variety can outlive us in the bottle.

## *Muscadet*

Muscadet on the Western end of the Loire Valley plays host to 3 main regional sub-appellations that play host to the Melon de Bourgogne grape variety. Initially described as Muscadet as early as 1939, wines produced from this grape were said to have had a musky aroma and or flavor associated with them, though many modern wine experts dispute this tone.

Wines from the Muscadet region of the Loire are made of varying qualities. Muscadet AOC is the most general designation for wines from the region, and are typically the most basic.

The 3 main regions of Muscadet are:

- **Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine**
- **Muscadet-Coteaux de la Loire**
- **Muscadet-Côtes de Grandlieu**

If you're scouting wine from this region, premium producers label their wines with their vineyard or village designation. It's best to look for wines labeled based on their specific village, as opposed to the entirety of the AOC. This ensures that you're buying higher quality, more focused wines from the region.

## *Sancerre*

Located Southeast of Orléans, Sancerre is a well known Loire Valley appellation. It's positioned across from the other noteworthy appellation of Pouilly-Fumé on the left bank of the Loire River.

Sancerre is best known for its Sauvignon Blanc production, with about 20% of the Loire's Pinot Noir coming from the region as well.

### *Pouilly-Fumé*

Pouilly-Fumé wines are some of the most sought after dry white wines in the world. Since France tends to label their wines after their regions, more so than grape variety, Pouilly-Fumé is actually Sauvignon Blanc that only compares to its regional rival, Sancerre, just across the Loire River. It's traditionally dry, and exhibits citrus, mineral and tree fruit tones in addition to a gun-smoke aromatic nuance (Hence: Pouilly-Fumé).

### *Anjou-Saumur*

Although Anjou wines are best described as wines produced not far from the city of Angers, due to its proximity to Saumur the appellations tend to be described as one. Anjou is probably best known as being one of the most diverse sub-appellations in the Loire given that its lack of a laser-focus on a particular grape variety might be their most noteworthy quality. Anjou dabbles in everything. From dry Chenin Blanc, to botrytis-infused sweet wine and rosé, Anjou serves as a broad example of the potential styles of wine that exist throughout the Loire Valley.

### *Chinon AOC*

Located literally in the heart of the Loire, Chinon is adequately placed along the banks of the River Vienne, with the majority of its vine plantings situated along steep, terraced vineyards. A tad bit of an anomaly, the best known wines from this region are red. Cabernet Franc to be exact. Chinon is home to a number of vineyards that produce Cabernet Franc in earnest along rocky, terraced plantings, in addition to Cabernet Sauvignon. Their Rosé wines are produced with Cabernet Franc and up to 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Chenin Blanc white wine is also produced in Chinon.