

Loire dry Chenin Blanc

Chenin is a multifaceted grape, thanks to its spread across this valley, and the differing styles made from its various terroirs. And that's what makes it exciting, says Jim Budd

CHENIN BLANC IS undoubtedly the Loire's most fascinating and diverse grape variety, capable of making a remarkable range of styles from bone-dry through to lusciously sweet as well as still and sparkling.

Recent DNA analysis suggests that Chenin is an offspring of Jura's Savagnin and so related to Sauvignon Blanc and Trousseau. The first historical reference to Chenin comes from the 9th century at Bouchemail, the small town at the eastern end of Savennières. Much later, in 1496, some Chenin was planted at Château de Chenonceau in eastern Touraine.

Chenin Blanc is largely confined to Anjou-Saumur and Touraine with outposts in Coteaux du Loir, in particular Jasnières, as well as the Fiefs Vendéens close to the Atlantic Coast. There is now a little planted way south in the Upper Loire in the Roannaise and Forez, where leading producers are experimenting with a range of white grapes. These wines will appear as IGP.

As Chenin is a mid- to late-ripening variety, it is not well suited to the Pays Nantais with its increased chance of wet weather in late September and October. Chenin's eastern limit is around Amboise – spring arrives 10 to 14 days later here than it does in Anjou due to the distance from the Atlantic, thus it is hard to get Chenin to ripen properly here. Instead Sauvignon Blanc is largely the chosen white variety in the Loire's eastern part.

Apart from the schist and slate of Anjou, Loire Chenin does best planted on limestone – the bedrock from Saumur eastwards. Chenin from limestone tends to have slightly higher acidity than those from Anjou.

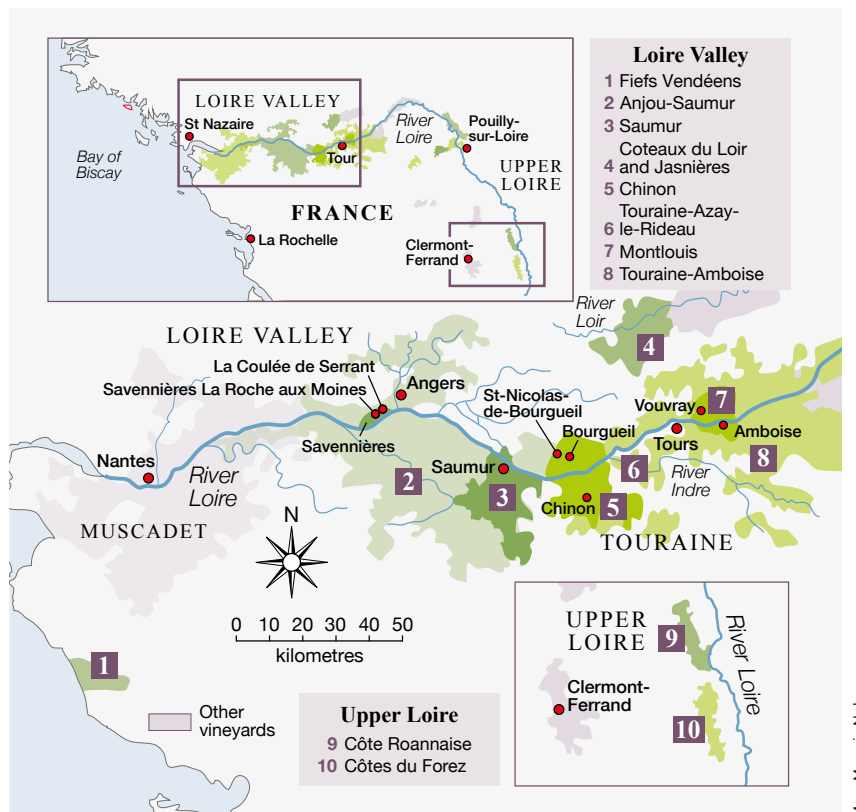
Oak and wine ageing

While there is a tradition in Vouvray and elsewhere in the Loire for fermenting and ageing wines in old wood, increasingly top Loire Chenin Blanc producers use newer wood, usually with a small proportion of new oak. There is a tendency to use 400-, 500- and 600-litre barrels with a medium toast rather than 225- or 228-litre barriques, so as to lessen oak flavour. There are also limited experiments using amphorae and concrete eggs.

Sweet Loire Chenin can be almost immortal, especially in great vintages. Dry Loire Chenin can also age brilliantly, although the opportunities to taste these older wines are considerably less than their sweet counterparts as there is less of a tradition – apart from in Vouvray and Savennières – of ageing dry wines. However, dry Vouvrays that are 40 years old or more are still certainly drinkable and enjoyable.

It is worth considering decanting Loire Chenin Blanc, especially from a recent vintage or if the wine appears closed. Also they should not be served too cold, otherwise their complexity will be masked.

Jim Budd is the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire, writes the award-winning Jimsloire.blogspot.com



Map: Maggie Nelson

Loire Chenin Blanc: know your vintages

2016 April frost, complicated year, good autumn means fine wines in tiny quantities. Too early to assess.

2015 Good vintage despite September rain. Rounder wines than '14. Drink 2017-2035

2014 Very good vintage saved by hot September. Classic wines with high acidity. 2018-2050.

2013 Late, small vintage saved by hot summer. Lean wines that may be ageing quickly. 2017-2025

2012 April frost, small vintage, good wines with quite high acidity. 2017-2030

2011 Early vintage, rot a problem. Drink these before your 2008s and 2010s.

2010 Long, hot autumn. Classic, with higher acidity than '09.

2009 Hot year, rich wines. Not as ageworthy as '08 or '10. 2017-2030.

2008 Saved by Indian summer. Precise, balanced and long lived. 2017-2040

Loire Chenin Blanc: the facts

Also known as Pineau de Loire, but use of this name is dying out

Chenin plantings in Loire 9,240ha (2014)

Chenin plantings in South Africa, by comparison 17,933ha (2014)

Dry white Loire appellations that can only use Chenin Montlouis, Chinon Blanc, Coteaux du Loir, Savennières, Touraine Amboise, Touraine Azay-le-Rideau, Jasnières (in Vouvray, 5% Arbois is permitted) ➤

The results

There’s a Loire Chenin for everyone, said our panel, impressed with the diversity, quality and great value on offer from this regional tasting. Christelle Guibert reports

WITH SUCH A large and diverse selection of dry Chenins from across the Loire, our experts were set for a fascinating tasting. They found some great, some good and some less-good wines but still, with 67% Recommended or more – and very few priced above £25 – they left very satisfied with the level of quality on offer.

The tasters didn’t agree on any one appellation standing head and shoulders above the rest; instead they found a spread of quality within each. Ben Llewelyn acknowledged ‘how reassuring it is that Chenin, which has its own unique characteristics, is also quite an egotistical grape variety: it saps up its place and terroir’.

Our experts found Anjou gave a richer style of Chenin with notes of baked apple, while Saumur was racier with fresh, limey, mineral notes. Chinon emerged as a great surprise, as Chris Kissack explained: ‘It’s not the first appellation you’d go to for whites, but some wines were really attractive – right up there at the top of the pile.’ Ben Llewelyn agreed: ‘The wines were fantastic, no messing around, just drinkability, class and real interest.’

Montlouis was another highlight and the panel found more charm here than in its neighbouring appellation of Vouvray. Savennières, the king of Chenin Blanc, was probably the most diverse in terms of quality. Kissack noted that ‘some wines had bright fruit, nice structure and fresh acidity, which seemed true to the appellation, but others showed an oxidised style that lacked purity’.

As for the seven Vin de France entries, Jim Budd said: ‘Our top wines could have potentially come from this category as some of the most interesting producers also make a Vin de France. However, these wines are often produced in tiny quantities and hard to get hold of, which probably explains why we had so few represented here.’

Budd was pleased that Chenin finally has the recognition among consumers it deserves, admitting this is partly due to South Africa: ‘The Cape has played the

‘Where the Loire wins every time is in its synergy of the grape and the terroir’ Ben Llewelyn

Chenin Blanc card and if the Loire is wise, it will jump on that bandwagon.’ But Llewelyn disagreed: ‘South Africa has taken Chenin and made a particular style of wine, which it presents beautifully. Where the Loire wins every time though is in its synergy of the grape and the terroir. The Loire is not just Chenin Blanc – it’s Vouvray, Savennières, Montlouis etc, and that’s so important.’

As you’d expect, there was vintage diversity, with the 2015s and 2014s (which dominated the tasting) showing best. ‘Both vintages were very good across much of the Loire, but very different in style,’ said Kissack. ‘2014 was fresher and tougher with more acidity, energy and life, while 2015 was richer with more exotic fruit character.’ Budd found some of the 2013s to be ageing very quickly but said the best of these and other vintages still had ‘terrific ageing ability – at least 20 to 30 years, with some being virtually immortal’.

The panel also found broad winemaking differences, as Llewelyn explained: ‘Like anywhere, some producers want to be more progressive and others stick to traditional routes; there were some biodynamic styles, and others that were straight and classic. While this makes buying wine confusing for the general consumer, it makes it fascinating to an interested wine lover as there are so many different styles.’ Llewelyn suggested *Decanter* readers look at ‘the inherent characters of each of these Chenin appellations, and then at the producers within them that match your taste – whether that be biodynamic, oxidative styles or lean, taut and precise wines. There’s something for everyone here.’

The scores	
169 wines tasted	
Exceptional	0
Outstanding	1
Highly Recommended	48
Recommended	65
Commended	23
Fair	21
Poor	11
Faulty	0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release still, dry (less than 9g/l residual sugar) 100% Chenin Blancs. Wines could come from anywhere in the Loire Valley but must be AP or Vin de France (no IGP wines)

Outstanding 95–97pts



Château de Passavant, Jarret de Montchenin, Anjou 2014
Decanter average score: 95/100pts **Individual judges’ scores:**
Jim Budd 95 **Chris Kissack** 95 **Ben Llewelyn** 95
£20 Appellation Nation
Château de Passavant is a family-owned estate in the upper Layon Valley. This part of the Layon is flat and pastoral – quite different from the steep slopes of the better-known lower Layon. Owned by the same family for four generations, Passavant became organic in 1998 and in 2011 moved to being biodynamic. Jarret is a selection of the best

Chenin Blanc, fermented and aged in 450-litre oak barrels (20% new) for 12 months. Passavant has an enviable reputation for its well-made but not flashy wines.

Jim Budd Toasty oak on the nose leads through to precise, ripe fruit on the palate. With time this will integrate into a real stunner; the fruit and texture will stand up extremely well. Lovely balance.

Chris Kissack Oak-rich aromas flow onto a palate that is concentrated, long, honeyed and textural, with a really glossy polish to the fruit. All white peach, orange zest and matchstick reduction. It is an Anjou for the cellar rather than the table, but it should be super given time.

Ben Llewelyn There’s a lovely nature to this wine: a well-defined nose followed by acid freshness and fruit concentration. It finishes in a classy style and has all the hallmarks of a great, long-lived Anjou. Open and very attractive.

Drink 2018-2027 **Alcohol** 13.5%

Highly Recommended 90–94pts



Château de Targé, Les Fresnettes, Saumur 2015 94 **JB** 92 **CK** 94 **BL** 95
£18 Swig
A really fascinating nose of lime leaf, polished citrus fruit and white peach that has great elegance infused with greengage and wild flowers. There is plenty of alcohol here but with impressive, pithy substance which is set up very well for the cellar. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 14.6%

Chanson Ludovic, Les Cabotines, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 93 **JB** 94 **CK** 90 **BL** 94
£18 POA Carte Blanche
Light notes of lavender, honeysuckle and apricots unfold onto an intense palate in a pretty and perfumed style with baked apple and biscuit notes. There is a confident Chenin Blanc pith and a breezy, interesting finish. **Drink** 2017-2030 **Alc** 12.5%

Couly-Dutheil, Les Chanteaux, Chinon 2015 93 **JB** 91 **CK** 95 **BL** 92
£10.50 Georges Barbier, Thorman Hunt
Enticing aromas of ripe pear, chalk and minerals. The flavours show the same confidence with a touch of ginger spice and honey in a supple, energetic, style with stony depth. An engaging wine full of charm and seductive balance. **Drink** 2017-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Domaine du Closel, Clos du Papillon, Savennières 2014 93 **JB** 95 **CK** 93 **BL** 91
£31.25 Avalon Wines
There is lightly polished fruit that is sandy and lightly dried, with a touch of matchstick reduction. It is richly textured with racy undertones, as well as delightful balance and harmony. **Drink** 2017-2035 **Alc** 14.5%

Domaine du Closel, La Jalousie, Savennières 2014 93 **JB** 93 **CK** 92 **BL** 93
£20.53 Ex-Cellar, Fields Morris & Verdin
This is glistening with supple texture, dried fruit concentration, peony and lavender perfume, plus an earthy undertow. There are peach stone, lychee and melon flavours within a firm, grippy frame, bolstered by bright acidity. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 13%

Domaine Ogereau, L’Enthousiasme, Savennières 2014 93 **JB** 97 **CK** 89 **BL** 92
£18 POA Les Caves de Pyrene
A wine that is well put together, full of compact fruit and minerals; a touch of lanolin comes through the floral notes too. Richly textured but attractively restrained, with a raw and pithy grip. **Drink** 2017-2030 **Alc** 14% ➤

The judges

Jim Budd

Budd is the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire and has contributed to Decanter since 1989. He writes the award-winning Jimsloire. blogspot.com, is one of the members of the

blog Les5duvin.wordpress.com and was the editor of the Circle of Wine Writers’ newsletter from 1991-2015. He also exposes the dangers of drinks investment on his sites Investdrinks.org and Investdrinks-blog.blogspot.com

Chris Kissack

Kissack is author of TheWinedoctor.com, a subscription website which he has published since 2000. He has focused on the Loire for many years, and has made regular trips since 1993, visiting

domaines and vineyards, and meeting the winemakers and reporting on their wines throughout the year.

Ben Llewelyn

Llewelyn has worked in the UK wine trade since 1997, starting at Oddbins, and then at Enotria. He moved his family to France in 2007 to experience the life of a winemaker while studying for his

Master of Wine, and in 2008 set up the wholesale wine agency and importer Carte Blanche, which leans towards producers who make wine as naturally as possible.

Taste top Bordeaux wines at *Decanter’s* Bordeaux Fine Wine Encounter – Saturday, 25 March 2017

This special event will showcase the evolution of Bordeaux wines over three decades, as more than 40 producers showcase vintages from 1990 onwards. Bordeaux is at the epicentre of fine wine, and this tasting will be a truly memorable experience for wine lovers. Three outstanding masterclasses are also taking place. For more information and to book tickets, visit [Decanter.com/events](https://www.decanter.com/events) or call +44 (0)20 3148 4513

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Domaine St-Nicolas, Le Haut des Clous, Fiefs Vendéens 2014 93 JB 96 CK 91 BL 92
£24.50 **Exel**
A fairly mute nose but hinting at some spice and red apple fruit. The palate is all tension and acidity – fresh, bright and lightly honeyed. A creamy mid-palate melds with sappy acidity and finishes long. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 13%



Eddy & Mileine Oosterlinck, Domaine de Juchepie, Le Clos de Juchepie, Anjou 2014 93 JB 96 CK 92 BL 92
N/A UK www.juchepie.fr
Fulsome and richly sewn with luscious honey and dried apricots. It is a big mouthful – not a refreshing wine but one that has great texture and length. The oxidative style is saved by the racy acidity. **Drink** 2017–2031 **Alc** 13.5%



Eric Nicolas, Domaine de Bellivière, Calligramme, Jasnières 2014 93 JB 92 CK 93 BL 94
£37 **Fields Morris & Verdin**
This nose has so much potential and the fruit concentration is obvious but not flashy in any way, so typical of Jasnières. Caramel oak on the palate gives over to lavender to form a wine redolent of its terroir and variety. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 13.5%



Yves Lambert, Domaine de St-Just, Les Perrières, Saumur 2015 93 JB 91 CK 92 BL 95
N/A UK www.st-just.net
Waxy notes and tones of baked apple with the weight of youthful fruit. The finish is laden with grip and fine acidity that lasts for ever. This is a great wine which needs time in bottle to evolve. **Drink** 2017–2021 **Alc** 13.5%



Anne et Yves Guégniard, Domaine de la Bergerie, Clos le Grand Beaupréau, Savennières 2014 92 JB 94 CK 91 BL 91
POA **Wine Source**
Lime and box hedge aromas combine with honey and quince to give a round, soft, chalky palate. Peach and apricot fruit wrap around a fine mineral frame. **Drink** 2017–2028 **Alc** 14%



Château de Villeneuve, Les Cormiers, Saumur 2015 92 JB 94 CK 92 BL 89
£17 (2013) **Your Sommelier**
Tropical fruit salad aromas are expressive yet subtle, with a little white pepper too. There is presence and an undeniable grip on the palate which is likely to take on more weight with bottle age. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 13%



Domaine de Rocheville, La Dame, Saumur 2014 92 JB 95 CK 91 BL 89
£19.50 **Dreyfus Ashby**
Lemons, pebbles, smoke and gravel perfume. The palate has real texture underpinning notes of creamed yellow plum and a touch of peach. Beneath this there is bright acidity very typical of the vintage, giving it a real sense of life. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 13%



Domaine des Forges, Savennières-Roche aux Moines 2015 92 JB 97 CK 89 BL 89
£11 **Lay & Wheeler**
An interesting nose of fresh caramel and rich fruit that is very primary in character. There is honey and toast from the rather obvious oak and a touch of golden pear. **Drink** 2017–2032 **Alc** 14%



Domaine du Petit Métris, Savennières 2015 92 JB 92 CK 94 BL 91
£16 **D Byrne, Jolly Vintner Too, Kwoff, Wine Poole**
Floral hints and white fruit sweetness come through on the nose, and the palate carries on this style with added elderflower and lanolin notes. Quite a soft finish but the acidity is there in the background. A totally smashing Savennières! **Drink** 2017–2028 **Alc** 13%



Château Pierre Bise, Savennières-Roche aux Moines 2014 91 JB 87 CK 93 BL 93
N/A UK www.chateaupierrebise.com
Lots of creamy lanolin aromas here and heady acacia characters. There is ripe apricot and tangerine fruit too with a soft, slightly lactic underbelly. An engaging wine with a lot going on. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 14%



Clos de L’Elu, Bastingage, Anjou 2015 91 JB 94 CK 90 BL 90
POA **Dynamic Vines**
A wine of substance, with orange peel and a pithy fruit bite. A touch of rhubarb melds well with creamy, lees-driven fruit on the palate and this extends to the finish with its solid frame of well-honed oak. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 14%



Domaine des Baumard, Clos du Papillon, Savennières 2007 91 JB 92 CK 92 BL 90
£25.95–£28.50 **Carruthers & Kent, Last Drop Wine, Museum Wines, The Oxford Wine Co, The Sampler**
Aromas of herb-infused honey and evolved fruit with an intriguing smoky, mineral note. The palate shows dried leaves, soft apricots and toasty almond. **Drink** 2017–2022 **Alc** 14.5%

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Eric Nicolas, Domaine de Bellivière, Vieilles Vignes Eparses, Coteaux du Loir 2014 91 JB 90 CK 94 BL 89
£30 **Fields Morris & Verdin**
Warm nose of baked apple and a touch of clove from the new oak. Honest white peach and pithy citrus, in a modern style but a bit undermined by the new oak, which will integrate with time. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 14%



Foreau Philippe, Domaine du Clos Naudin, Vouvray 2015 91 JB 95 CK 89 BL 90
£23 **OW Loeb**
A lean citrus fruit nose leads onto a softer palate of mouthfilling apples and spice, leafy peach and some mint and sage elements too. There is a stony mineral texture with some forceful acidity, and therefore the potential to age. **Drink** 2017–2024 **Alc** 13.5%



François Chidaine, Baudoin, Vin de France 2015 91 JB 91 CK 91 BL 90
£30.50 **H2Vin**
Wild honey and baked apples appear on the nose and palate, with an underlying chalky texture running well with the fruit. There is a slightly loose feel to the palate, but there is still freshness and poise. **Drink** 2017–2023 **Alc** 13%



François Chidaine, Clos du Breuil, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 91 JB 93 CK 91 BL 90
£23.75 **H2Vin**
Clean and precise, this wine is lightly honeyed with quince fruit alongside bright pear and a racy, stony texture. Lots of pithy substance with a slightly sour fruit character, but it is direct and energetic. **Drink** 2017–2029 **Alc** 13%



François Chidaine, Les Bournais, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 91 JB 94 CK 90 BL 90
£29.25 **H2Vin**
The nose is open and fresh with violets and honey but also intriguing spearmint and thyme. It has a gentle, easygoing style, so is attractive and approachable with impressive harmony overall. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 13%



Frédéric Mabileau, Chenin des Rouillères, Anjou 2015 91 JB 91 CK 91 BL 90
£11.95 **The Wine Society**
Ripe pear, red apple and golden toast mingle with floral tones. There is also a breezy note of lavender twitching off the taut-edged palate, which is fresh and very true to the appellation. **Drink** 2017–2026 **Alc** 13%



Manoir de la Tête Rouge, Tête d’Ange, Saumur 2015 91 JB 93 CK 91 BL 90
POA **Carte Blanche**
Pretty red apple and citrus aromas with hints of limestone and grapefruit that follow through on the palate. There is a seductive touch of sweetness with a long, rolling, textured finish. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 13.5%



Antoine Sanzay, Les Salles Martin, Saumur 2015 90 JB 92 CK 89 BL 89
POA **Kitchen & Vine**
Herbaceous notes flow onto green apples and quince with a sherbet lift and caramel too. The palate is rather more restrained – quite firm and solid – with an oaky substance to it and a touch of bitterness. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 12%



Cave Vendômois, Le Carillon de Vendôme, Coteaux du Vendômois 2015 90 JB 94 CK 89 BL 87
POA **Vin Cognito**
A bright, expressive nose of lime and grass clippings combines with sherbet apple. The palate seems restrained, softly formed, with vivacious acidity and a peach-skin character. **Drink** 2017–2030 **Alc** 13%



Château de Bois-Brinçon, Les Saules de Montbenault, Anjou 2014 90 JB 93 CK 89 BL 87
N/A UK www.chateau-bois-brincon.com
Baked apple, a touch of spice and a velvety-textured palate all suggest a well-made and proportioned wine. The finish has a pithy edge and although not long, the palate tapers well. **Drink** 2017–2028 **Alc** 13.5%



Château de Bois-Brinçon, Terre de Grès, Anjou 2014 90 JB 87 CK 88 BL 94
£12.99–£14.99 **House of Townend, Matthew Clark, Morgenrot, Private Cellar**
A complete wine, with caramel and cloves from the oak, ash and spice too. The palate is a perfect harmony of lanolin, honey and apricot, on an oaky finish. **Drink** 2017–2022 **Alc** 12.5%



Château de Coulaine, Les Pieds Rôtis, Touraine 2015 90 JB 92 CK 88 BL 90
POA **Expression du Terroir**
A restrained nose that is fresh and charming, leading onto a rich, textured palate with a full, imposing, characterful style. The peach and orchard fruit is supported by well-handled oak and lime acidity. **Drink** 2017–2022 **Alc** 13% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Château de Fesles, Anjou 2014
90 JB 90 CK 90 BL 90
£13.35 Private Cellar
A taut and sappy wine with golden orchard fruits that are sweetly ripe yet not overdone. It is lean, reflecting the 2014 vintage, with some nervous energy but it is no less delicious for that. **Drink** 2018-2030 **Alc** 13%



Château Moncontour, Vouvray 2014
90 JB 90 CK 90 BL 89
£11.99 Sogrape UK
Pea and mint notes come through on the austere nose. It is full of fresh clean lines with a polished substance that is still quite tight but will open out with some degree of charm. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 12%



Château Soucherie, Blanc Ivoire, Anjou 2015
90 JB 94 CK 88 BL 89
N/A UK www.domaine-de-la-soucherie.fr
An uncomplicated, quiet style showing an attractive, generous texture with grip underneath the honey, apple and pear fruit. It is firm, pithy and bitter, but has enough ripeness to carry it through. **Drink** 2017-2030 **Alc** 12.5%



Château Soucherie, Clos des Perrières, Savennières 2014
90 JB 92 CK 88 BL 91
N/A UK www.domaine-de-la-soucherie.fr
Aromas of box hedge and softly polished oak. There is concentration but the terroir shines through with lively citrus acidity. It may take on greater weight with further bottle age. **Drink** 2017-2028 **Alc** 12%



Domaine Michel Chevré, Clos de l'Écotard, Saumur 2015
90 JB 85 CK 94 BL 90
POA Les Caves de Pyrene
A delightful, gentle wine with great fragrance and a honeyed character to the nose and palate. The fruit is cool and fresh but concentrated, and this rolls onto a long finish. **Drink** 2017-2020 **Alc** 13%



Domaine de Bablut, Petit Prince, Anjou 2014
90 JB 90 CK 91 BL 88
N/A UK www.bablut.fr
Bright notes on the nose but the palate here seems a little dilute. It is crunchy and mineral combined with exciting acidity, so give it time and this will come together. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13%



Domaine de la Paleine, Pamina, Saumur 2015
90 JB 92 CK 89 BL 89
N/A UK www.domaine-paleine.com
A rich and honeyed style of Chenin with lanolin and sweet fruit showing through. The broad palate is a touch confected but the acidity is animated and it is impressive all the same. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13%



Domaine des Forges, Clos du Papillon, Savennières 2015
90 JB 92 CK 87 BL 92
£17.95 Lay & Wheeler, Tanners
A soft style of Savennières but showing a bitter, pithy grip through the middle, which rages on to the finish. The palate lingers with ginger and apple, but in a very refined manner. **Drink** 2018-2030 **Alc** 14%



Domaine des Roches Neuves, L'Insolite, Saumur 2015
90 JB 92 CK 91 BL 87
£16-£20.70 D&D Wine, Exel, Les Caves de Pyrene
A clean, zippy style of Chenin that has vigour and real charm. White peach is deliciously poised on top of abundant stony minerals. A well-formed, balanced wine that could be a revelation given time. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 13%



Domaine Patrick Baudouin, Effusion, Anjou 2015
90 JB 90 CK 88 BL 92
£22.50 H2Vin
A nose well framed with oak which enhances the wild honey and earthy, appley nature of the wine. There is warm chamomile and toasty fruit on the palate backed up by orange pith and blossom. **Drink** 2018-2028 **Alc** 12.5%



François Chidaine, Les Bournais Franc de Pied, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015
90 JB 88 CK 90 BL 91
£30.50 H2Vin
This has a fresh, dusty nose of rosemary, thyme and sweet peach, backed by spicy lanolin. A red apple palate is backed by incisive acidity and fine bitterness. Not a heavyweight, but attractive. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13%



François Pinon, Vouvray 2015
90 JB 95 CK 86 BL 90
£20 Vine Trail
Woody hints intermingle with acacia and earthy tones, flowing onto a cool palate that is initially oily then fans out with mineral freshness. There is impressive grip on the finish; a robust example. **Drink** 2017-2028 **Alc** 12.7%

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Frédéric Mabileau, Chenin du Puy, Saumur 2014
90 JB 91 CK 90 BL 90
£18 The Wine Society
Very bright floral nose that is a little light on concentration but still pretty and bolstered by a touch of sweetness. Quince and peach fruit make a harmonious duo with delicate apricot and crushed minerals. **Drink** 2017-2024 **Alc** 12.5%



Jean-Noël Millon, La Source du Ruault, La Coulée d'Aunis, Saumur 2014
90 JB 90 CK 88 BL 92
N/A UK +33 (0)2 41 52 93 80
A racy example from Saumur with some vanilla and wood notes coming through, plus a touch of honey and lime fruit. It is a little austere but promising, so needs some time in the cellar. **Drink** 2017-2028 **Alc** 13%



Le Pas St-Martin, Le Vent Dans Les Saules, Anjou 2015
90 JB 89 CK 93 BL 88
N/A UK www.lepassaintmartin.fr
A round, soft style with notes of polished pear skin and expressive peach, giving a silky honeyed mouthful. It is supple, easily melding the acidity with a touch of sweetness and an energetic finish. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13.5%



Manoir de la Tête Rouge, Chapitre, Saumur 2012
90 JB 91 CK 87 BL 91
POA Carte Blanche
This has a creamy nose like rice pudding with some oak-derived spice. The palate is kept together by well-formed fruit and fine lemony acidity. A wine to enjoy now. **Drink** 2017-2018 **Alc** 13%



Nicolas Grosbois & Philippe Mesnier, Clos des Blancs, Touraine Azay-le-Rideau 2014
90 JB 88 CK 90 BL 92
N/A UK www.domainegrosbois.fr
An interesting wine. Exotic aromas of ripe fruit and citrus edges. The palate is well formed and balanced – the oak still needs to resolve and the lees to integrate, but there is real charm here. **Drink** 2017-2020 **Alc** 12.5%



Thibaud Boudignon, Anjou 2014
90 JB 93 CK 85 BL 91
£23.50 Justerini & Brooks
An amazing nose of violet and lavender which, added to some red cherry fruit, finds its way on to the palate too. Pine needles and clove join in with a tart flash, while the finish is acid-washed and has razor-like precision. **Drink** 2018-2030 **Alc** 13%

Recommended 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	BL	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Château de Coulaine, Chinon 2015	89	88	93	87	A fresh, perfumed wine with notes of fennel and apple with a touch of limestone and chalk. A honeysuckle character comes through on the finish.	13%	2017-2020	POA	Expression du Terroir
Château de Parnay, Chemin des Murs, Saumur 2015	89	88	89	91	Defined apple, fresh ginger and honey spark through this wine. The palate has a limey flash lifted by a little matchstick reduction.	13%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.chateaudeparnay.fr
Domaine de Noiré, Chinon 2015	89	92	86	89	Interesting pear skin and spice aromas mingle in a oxidised style with cooked fruit and a bold, grippy, acid-washed finish.	13%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.domainedenoire.com
Domaine des Forges, Moulin du Gué, Savennières 2015	89	90	86	90	A cool and lean wine with herbal, mint and sweet pea characters. There is typical Savennières austerity and length with a sappy edge.	13.5%	2018-2030	£7	Co-op, Lay & Wheeler
Domaine des Roches Neuves, L'Echelier, Saumur 2015	89	86	90	90	This is of the herbaceous school of Saumur, and has a mineral character which is charming now but needs time to evolve.	13%	2017-2020	POA	Les Caves de Pyrene
Dom Les Grds Vignes, Varenne de Combre, Anjou 2014	89	94	86	88	A slightly oxidative leading edge here, but there is nicely judged oak and fine freshness. An interesting example of Anjou, if not strictly classic.	13%	2017-2029	N/A UK	www.domainesgrandesvignes.com
Domaine L&B Jousset, 1er Rendez-Vous, Montlouis 2015	89	90	89	87	Shy, smoky nose with baked white peach and grilled almonds underneath. A little tight on the finish, so it should benefit from further bottle age.	13%	2017-2025	£24.10 (2012)	Hedonism
Domaine Perrault Jadaud, La Grande Grive, Vouvray 2015	89	90	89	88	A nose of sweet perfumed acacia and honeysuckle, with white peach and apricot fruit. A wine with typicity and an impressive energy.	13.9%	2017-2028	N/A UK	perrault.jadaud@gmail.com
Jérémie Mourat, Clos St-André, Fiefs Vendéens Mareuil 2013	89	87	92	87	Sappy greengage and plum come through on the reductive nose. The palate shows delightful fruit as well as a salty lick of the sea.	14%	2018-2024	£17.60	Bancroft
Le Pas St-Martin, La Pierre Frite, Saumur 2015	89	90	87	89	An elegant expression of Chenin with a nose of quince and green plum. The palate has a gentle substance of lime and a touch of kiwi.	12.5%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.lepassaintmartin.fr
Pierre Chainier, Première, Vouvray 2015	89	92	88	87	Saddle leather, wild herb and raw honey come through in a soft and supple style showing a little cushion of residual sugar, finishing very gently.	13%	2017-2024	£7.69-£8.99	Ocado, The Wine Station

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	BL	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
A&Y Guégniard, Dom Bergerie, Pierres Girard, Anjou 2014	88	91	87	86	Light orchard fruit aromas dusted with vanilla. The palate is restrained, glossy, textured and could well be a revelation in two to three years' time	13.5%	2017-2028	POA	Waud Wine Club
Bernard Fouquet, Le Petit Clos, Vouvray 2015	88	87	85	91	The soft scent of lavender and orange blossom exudes from this wine. A robust palate follows, reminiscing of greengage and kiwi fruits.	13%	2017-2025	N/A UK	www.vouvrayfouquet.com
Cave Montlouis, Accord des Anges, Montlouis 2012	88	90	89	86	A matchstick and acacia nose flows onto a palate of grilled almonds with plenty of character. An exciting mouthful with a slight salty minerality.	12%	2017-2020	N/A UK	www.cave-montlouis.com
Champalou, Vouvray 2015	88	85	89	90	Closed on the nose with subtle hints of toasted almonds and baked apple. A soft start to the palate but this transforms into an intriguing, zesty wine.	12.5%	2017-2023	£15	Carruthers & Kent, Les Caves de Pyrene
Clau de Nell, Vin de France 2015	88	88	89	86	Oxidative in style: bruised apple and yeasty notes suggest minimal-intervention winemaking. Grilled orchard fruit palate finishes on a citrus bite.	12%	2017-2020	POA	Hedonism
Michel Chevré, Clos L'Ecotard, Les Pentes, Saumur 2015	88	86	91	87	Still young, this has a pure fruit expression and raciness. It is full and grippy, wrapped in grainy oak; well set for the future.	13%	2017-2019	POA	Les Caves de Pyrene
Dom A Lambert, Ch de Breze, Clos David, Saumur 2014	88	86	86	91	A smoky, mineral style of Saumur. Could have more complexity but it is wrapped in a spindle of acidity to complement the honey and lime notes.	13%	2017-2025	N/A UK	www.st-just.net
Domaine de Bablut, Ordovicien, Anjou 2014	88	84	89	90	Seductive honeycomb and lychee linger around the nose and palate, with captivating caramel notes. A rich, sophisticated and serious style.	13%	2017-2020	N/A UK	www.bablut.fr
Domaine de la Noblaie, La Part des Anges, Chinon 2014	88	87	92	86	A buttery texture is noticeable, along with dried orchard fruits and wood notes. The package works as a whole but it is a little dilute on the finish.	13%	2017-2021	POA	The Sampler
Domaine de la Petite Roche, Fût de Chêne, Anjou 2014	88	86	88	89	A delicate wine with light floral characters and nuanced fruit wrapped around sweet honey notes, refined oak and a twist of cooked banana.	13.5%	2017-2024	N/A UK	www.domainepetiteroche.com
Domaine de Noiré, Amphora, Chinon 2015	88	88	91	85	A charismatic Chenin. Light and simple showing limestone minerals and yellow peach fruit, with a touch of classic bitterness on the finish.	13%	2017-2020	N/A UK	www.domainedenoire.com
Domaine d'Orfeuilles, Vouvray 2015	88	86	88	89	Lovely spice and lanolin notes underscored by apple and acacia alongside interesting capsicum, smoke and black pepper too. A wine to age.	12.83%	2017-2025	POA	Bibendum PLB
Domaine du Petit Métris, Vent de Galerne, Anjou 2015	88	89	86	89	A little lean lemon, showing lemon and herbal fruit characters. This finishes with a woolly undertone but is likeable nonetheless.	13%	2017-2025	POA	Boutinot
Domaine Guiberteau, Saumur 2015	88	91	85	89	The nose resonates with sappy, leafy lime and apricot fruit set against a seam of caramel. A pleasing wine for early consumption.	12.41%	2017-2025	£18	H2Vin, New Street Wine Shop
Domaine Langlois-Château, Saumur 2015	88	92	91	80	A great composition here of palate freshness plus soft honey and lychee fruit lifted by a saline character. Has persistence and substance.	13%	2017-2025	POA	H2Vin, Le Vignoble
Domaine Patrick Baudouin, Les Gâts, Anjou 2014	88	88	86	89	A little confected by sweet vanilla oak, but refined fruit rubs along with wild honey notes and a touch of pithiness on the finish.	13%	2017-2026	£43	H2Vin
Domaine Pierre Chauvin, L'Argonnette, Anjou 2015	88	90	84	90	Caramelised fruit and a suave oak are the dominant characters here, giving the wine a plushness that lacks a little freshness.	13%	2017-2024	N/A UK	www.domaine-pierre-chauvin.pluginwine.com
Domaine Vincent Carême, Peu Morier, Vouvray 2015	88	89	85	89	A supple style of Vouvray: oily textured and laced with acacia and lanolin. The wine builds on the finish, leaving the palate coated and scented.	11.3%	2017-2025	£20	Berry Bros & Rudd, The Sampler
La Folle Berthe, Fontenelles, Saumur 2015	88	90	88	87	Exotic fruit with an easy charm sewn up in a rich structure. Sweet vanilla and oxidised notes come through under the golden pear fruit. Supple finish.	12.5%	2017-2022	POA	Under the Bonnet
Moulin de Chauvigné, Clos Brochard, Savennières 2015	88	85	91	89	Dried apples, a touch of satsuma and wild flower perfume floats across the nose and palate backed up by chalky minerality.	13.5%	2017-2025	N/A UK	sylvie@moulindechavigne.com
Grosbois&Mesnier, Dom Hauts Baigneux, Touraine-ALR 2015	88	87	87	90	The nose is fairly subdued but the palate has a zesty edge with its needle-like core of acidity on top of the charming peach fruit	12.5%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.domainegrosbois.fr
Bernard Fouquet, Le Marigny, Vouvray 2015	87	87	85	89	A well-formed wine exuding classic Vouvray characters on top of geranium and pea notes. It is tight at present but has good length.	13%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.vouvrayfouquet.com
Champalou, Le Portail, Vouvray 2013	87	86	88	86	Pungent oak on the nose and palate slightly dominates the spicy sweet apple fruit, but decent acidity balances the bundle.	13%	2017-2020	£25	Les Caves de Pyrene
Château de Fosse-Sèche, Arcane, Saumur 2014	87	86	86	90	Refined aromas of ripe yellow apples with a hint of honey and apricot. The oak is toasty and caramelised – perhaps a touch confected.	13.5%	2017-2022	£22	Amazon, Top Selection
Château de la Roulerie, Les Magnolias, Anjou 2015	87	86	84	90	This shows the typicity of Chenin in a well-judged oaky frame, but it is a little simple right now. The acidity is zippy and promises a decent future.	12%	2017-2025	£22.70	Tilleys Wines, The Wine Connection
Château de la Roulerie, Les Terrasses, Anjou 2015	87	87	84	90	There is pronounced sappy autumnal fruit here allied to a creamy density and texture. Perhaps a little neutral despite its fleshy middle.	12%	2018-2025	£28.65	Peter Osborne, The Wine Connection
Clos de l'Elu, Ephata, Anjou 2014	87	87	83	92	Lightly baked orange aromas showing some nutty oxidation, with a touch of cloves and ash. A hint of sweetness is countered by pith and velvety texture.	13.5%	2017-2020	£45	Dynamic Vines

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	BL	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Dom de la Garrelière, Chenin de la Colline, Touraine 2015	87	87	86	89	Crunchy berry, yellow plum and white pepper are dominant characters here, plus a little banana too. Really rather charming; a good aperitif-style wine.	13%	2017-2020	N/A UK	www.garrelliere.com
Domaine de Montgilet, Anjou 2015	87	85	89	88	A curious toasty, meaty aroma comes from the glass, yet the palate shows a vibrant fruit character of orange, pear and apple tart.	13%	2017-2020	£6.50	Thorman Hunt
Domaine Delesvaux, Feuille d'Or, Anjou 2015	87	90	83	87	Enticing creamy honeycomb is evident on the nose, and the palate is filled with woody spice and oak, so it needs time to integrate.	13%	2017-2025	N/A UK	domaine.delesvaux@hotmail.fr
Domaine des Roches Neuves, Clos Romans, Saumur 2015	87	85	87	89	Not an overly expressive nose, just a light, lemony minerality. The palate follows in the same vein, with gentle citrus fruits, lime leaf and herbal notes.	13%	2017-2019	POA	Les Caves de Pyrene
Domaine du Petit Métris, Clos de la Marche, Savennières 2013	87	82	89	89	A generous wine with creamy tangerine aromas and loose-knit spice. Caramelised pineapple, mint and cumin become evident on the palate.	13%	2017-2019	£15.99	Boutinot
Dom Les Grnds Vignes, Varenne du Poirier, Anjou 2014	87	87	85	89	When creamy rhubarb-infused aromas mix with caramel, the impression can be clumsy, but this is saved by racy acidity and taut fruit which rescues it all.	13%	2017-2024	N/A UK	www.domainesgrandesvignes.com
Jean-Claude et Didier Aubert, Vouvray 2014	87	84	89	87	A simple Vouvray in essence, with added influence from toasted fruits, grilled almonds and leafy peach. It's fairly bitter but still quite stylish.	13%	2017-2021	£13.10	Yapp Brothers
Patrick Baudouin, Savennières 2014	87	86	88	86	A lees-influenced character here, complemented by a flash of ginger. It lacks a little concentration, but it is grippy and attractive nonetheless.	13.5%	2017-2021	£29	H2Vin
Xavier Courant, Existe en Blanc, Vin de France 2015	87	89	85	87	Bruised apple combines with crunchy white grape to give a fresh and firm wine while at the same time being creamy and plush.	13%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.loubliee.fr
Baudry Dutour, Cuvée 3 Coteaux, Chinon 2015	86	84	86	87	Charming white peach twinned with a racy, citric element makes for a refreshing, uncomplicated wine with a touch of greenness on the finish.	12.5%	2017-2020	£9.90	Petit Vineyard
Clos du Gaimont, Vouvray 2015	86	87	84	87	A smoky Vouvray, layered with sweetly textured fruit and an almond backbone. The structure is quite austere, with prominent acidity.	13.5%	2017-2024	£12.99	Virgin Wines
Couly-Dutheil, Les Moulins de Turquant, Saumur 2015	86	88	88	82	Aromas and flavours of minerals, lychee and white currants are pushed aside by a touch of greenness. It's firm, but could have more zip.	13.5%	2017-2021	£9	Thorman Hunt
Domaine de la Noblaie, La Noblaie, Chinon 2015	86	82	86	90	A few curious harsh flavours here, but it is predominantly greengage and gingerbread with a stony touch and a pithy fruit finish.	13%	2017-2020	POA	The Sampler, The Wine Society
Domaine de Rocheville, La Jouvencelle, Saumur 2014	86	87	86	85	Fairly reserved aromas and flavours, mainly of creamy greengages and some dry oak, with a savoury finish.	12.5%	2017-2021	£15.90	Dreyfus Ashby, Handford
Domaine des Deux Arcs, Savennières 2014	86	82	90	87	Oxidation makes itself present on the nose, underneath the caramelised apple, baked pear and demerara sugar sweetness.	13.5%	2017-2022	POA	Sylvestre
Domaine Langlois-Château, Vieilles Vignes, Saumur 2014	86	87	88	83	A simple, matchstick-toned nose leads onto a fulsome palate with a thin vein of acidity running through to the finish.	14%	2017-2024	POA	Cambridge Wine Merchants, Le Vignoble, Luvian's, Philglas & Swiggot
Domaine Les Pierres Ecrites, Empreintes, Montlouis 2015	86	83	83	91	Notes of reduction on the nose lead onto golden pear and leafy notes on the palate, coming together neatly on a slightly dilute finish.	14.5%	2017-2020	N/A UK	+33 (0)6 31 72 22 68
Dom L&B Jousset, 1er Rendez-Vous Longue, Montlouis 2014	86	86	85	86	Scented aromas of spun sugar and cooked apple mix with toasted almond flavours. It's a touch oxidative and showing a little heat.	13.5%	2017-2020	POA	Hedonism
E&M Oosterlinck Dom de Juchepie, Monts, Anjou 2014	86	91	90	76	A little ill-defined, though the palate is gently textured with almond oak, and grainy fruit peeking through from underneath.	13%	2017-2028	N/A UK	www.juchepie.fr
François Chidaine, Les Argiles, Vin de France 2015	86	86	89	84	The nose of fresh apple indicates a controlled winemaking environment. The palate is clean and fresh, and may soften with bottle age.	13%	2017-2021	£23.75	H2Vin
François Chidaine, Choisses, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015	86	90	86	82	Rich quince and alluring golden pear notes float around in a pretty style, yet it finishes with a hint of bitterness.	13%	2017-2019	£26.50	H2Vin
Grange Tiphaine, Clef de Sol, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015	86	85	88	86	A pleasing, gentle wine that shows baked elements of raisin and white pepper spice, fading away quite quickly.	13%	2017-2020	POA	Dynamic Vines
Mélaric, Billes de Roche, Saumur 2014	86	81	87	89	A nose of baked earth and caramel where the oak stands out giving a sweet-spicy character to the nose and palate.	13%	2017-2019	POA	Under the Bonnet
Mélaric, Les Fontenelles, Saumur 2014	86	89	86	84	As the reductive qualities fade, light floral notes start to come through and the fresh acid structure keeps it going.	13%	2017-2020	POA	Under the Bonnet
Nicolas Joly, Savennières-Coulée de Serrant 2014	86	86	79	93	Gamey wild herbs meld with raisins and honey in an oxidative style, with lots of chalky grip on the finish.	14.5%	2017-2032	POA	Dynamic Vines
Nicolas Reau, Attention Chenin Méchant, Anjou 2015	86	88	85	86	This seems polished at first, with grilled tropical and orchard fruit, orange blossom and lemon zest. It's fresh with a lightly mineral twist.	11.5%	2017-2027	£16.99	Les Caves de Pyrene
Dom Pintray, Eole et Bacchus, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015	86	84	85	89	A fairly lean and austere style of honey and citrus fruit but it has an energetic mineral core which leads it through.	12.5%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.pintray.com

Commended 83-85pts
■ Château du Hureau, Argile, Saumur 2013 85, 12.5%, 2017-2020, £17.95 Bancroft ■ Château Pierre Bise, Clos Le Grand Beaupréau, Savennières 2014 85, 13.5%, 2017-2019, £17.95 (2011) Stone Vine & Sun ■ Christophe et Jean Guestault, Le Pigeonnier, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 85, 12%, 2017-2020, N/A UK www.le-pigeonnier-de-fombeche.eu ■ Domaine Arnaud Lambert, Coulée de St-Cyr, Saumur 2014 85, 13.5%, 2017-2022, £18 Raeburn ■ Domaine Ogereau, Anjou en Chenin, Anjou 2015 85, 13.5%, 2018-2022, POA Les Caves de Pyrene ■ Domaine Ogereau, Clos Le Grand Beaupréau, Savennières 2014 85, 14%, 2017-2022, POA Les Caves de Pyrene ■ Domaine Vieux Vauvert, Vouvray 2015 85, 13%, 2017-2020, £9.99-£10.50 Exel Wines, Matthew Clark, Ocado, Waitrose ■ Sauvion, Signature de Cleray, Anjou 2015 85, 12%, 2017-2026, £9.99 Matthew Clark ■ Baudry Dutour, Château de St-Louans, Chinon 2014 84, 13%, 2017-2020, N/A UK UK www.baudry-dutour.fr ■ Cave Vendômois, Montagne Blanche, Coteaux du Vendômois 2013 84, 13%, 2017-2019, N/A UK www.vincognito.co.uk ■ Château d'Epiré, Savennières 2014 84, 13.5%, 2017-2025, £17.70 Yapp Brothers ■ Damien Pinon, Tuffo, Vouvray 2015 84, 12%, 2017-2022, £14.50 The Knotted Vine ■ Domaine de Montgilet, Vin de France 2015 84, 12%, 2017-2020, POA Thorman Hunt ■ Domaine Delesvaux, Authentique Franc de Pied, Anjou 2015 84, 13.5%, 2017-2020, N/A UK [domaine.delesvaux@hotmail.fr](mailto:delesvaux@hotmail.fr) ■ Domaine d'Orfeuilles, Sillex, Vouvray 2015 84, 13.3%, 2017-2020, POA Bibendum PLB ■ Domaine Les Pierres Ecrites, Petits Boulay, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 84, 13.8%, 2017-2021, N/A UK +33 (0)6 31 72 22 68 ■ Florent Cosme, Coup de Fougue, Vouvray 2015 84, 13.5%, 2017-2018, £16 Winecraft ■ Le Pas St-Martin, Les Mille Rocs, Anjou 2014 84, 14%, 2018-2023, N/A UK www.lepassaintmartin.fr

fr ■ Les Noades, Clos Dégas, Saumur 2014 83, 13%, 2017-2020, N/A UK www.lesnoades.com ■ Château Princé, Les Ardoisières, Anjou 2015 83, 13%, 2017-2019, £16.98 (2012) EJB Wines ■ Complices de Loire, Clair de Lune, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2014 83, 13%, 2017-2020, N/A UK www.complicesdeloire.com ■ Le Pas St-Martin, Jurassique, Saumur 2014 83, 13%, 2017-2020, N/A UK www.lepassaintmartin.fr ■ Philippe Alliet, Chinon 2015 83, 13%, 2017-2020, N/A UK +33 (0)2 47 93 17 62

Fair 76-82pts
■ Domaine Pierre Chauvin, La Fontaine des Bois, Anjou 2014 82 ■ Nicolas Joly, Clos de la Bergerie, Savennières-Roche aux Moines 2014 82 ■ Peter Hahn, Le Clos de la Meslerie, Vouvray 2013 82 ■ Sebastien Cornille, L'Orée de la Berterie, Coteaux du Loir 2014 82 ■ Château de la Roche Bousseau, Anjou 2015 81 ■ Château de la Roulerie, Le P'Tit Chenin, Anjou 2015 81 ■ Domaine de la Bonnelière, Les Perruchers, Saumur 2013 81 ■ Mélaric, Clos de la Cerisaie, Saumur 2013 81 ■ Domaine Hauret-Baleine, Clos dee Valliennes, Anjou 2015 81 ■ Domaine de Nerleux, Les Loups Blancs, Saumur 2015 80 ■ Domaine Vincendeau, Le Raguenet, Anjou 2015 80 ■ M Plouzeau, Les Cornuelles, Chinon 2015 80 ■ Vincent et Tania Carême, Spring, Vouvray 2015 80 ■ Château Pierre Bise, Clos de Coulaine, Savennières 2014 79 ■ Domaine de Montoray, L'Oiseau Blanc, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 79 ■ Domaine de Rocheville, Le Clos de la Thibaudière, Saumur 2013 79 ■ Manoir de la Tête Rouge, l'Enchentoir, Saumur 2013 79 ■ Château Pierre Bise, Les Rouannières, Anjou 2014 78 ■ Domaine de Montoray, Libreval, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 78 ■ Mathieu Cosme, Les Promenards, Vouvray 2015 78 ■ Domaine des Deux Arcs, Anjou 2014 76

Poor 70-75pts
■ Famille Vaillant, Et Ce Terra, Vin de France 2014 74 ■ Château de Montgueret, Saumur 2015 73 ■ Domaine de la Noiraie, Serenade, Vin de France 2015 72 ■ Eddy & Mileine Oosterlinck, Domaine de Juchepie, La Jarre de Juchepie, Anjou 2015 71

Faulty
■ Château Gaudrelle, Les Gués d'Amand, Vouvray 2015 (unclean, possible TCA) ■ Domaine Vincent Carême, Sec, Vouvray 2015 (unclean, possible TCA) ■ Nicolas Joly, Les Vieux Clos, Savennières 2014 (still fermenting) ■ Beatrice et Pascal Lambert, Les Chesnaies, Chinon 2014 (unclean, possible TCA) ■ Beatrice et Pascal Lambert, Rochette, Chinon 2014 (unclean, possible TCA) ■ Lebreton, Domaine des Rochelles, Roche des Rochelles, Anjou 2015 (TCA) ■ Gabriële et Régis Dansault, Epikuria II, Montlouis-sur-Loire 2015 (TCA)

For full UK stockist details, see p97

Next month's panel tastings
Premium red Rioja (over £20) & red Côtes du Rhône Villages

Expert summary

Jim Budd

A positive tasting that showed off the terroir-driven nature of Loire Chenin Blanc and its differing styles, with Anjou, particularly Savennières, the standouts



Jim Budd, the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire, writes award-winning blog jimsloire.blogspot.com

WITH 169 WINES entered, we had the opportunity to assess Chenin Blanc from across the Loire. It was also very positive that there was such a good entry despite the recent short vintages and the effects of 2016's late April frost on stock. Results are rather mixed, with a number of very good wines but only one Outstanding one. It would have been nice to have had more Highly Recommended wines. Sadly 11 were Poor or Faulty. Almost all the wines entered came from the fine 2014 and 2015 vintages. With its higher acidity, 2014 is more a year for Loire aficionados, while the softer 2015s may well have broader

appeal. Of our top 49 wines, 21 came from 2014 and 26 from 2015 – a pretty even split. It will be fascinating to see how these two vintages age. My hunch is that 2014 will last longer. There were not enough 2013s and '12s entered to draw any real conclusions, except that the few 2013s we tasted were ageing quickly.

Our tasting demonstrated that Chenin Blanc in the Loire has a keen sense of place, with the styles of wine markedly different. Jasnières, for example, is more austere and racy than the rounder Anjou Chenins. Our top 49 wines show a wide spread of regions, with 13 different appellations along with one Vin de France. Anjou, with 12 wines, was easily the standout region, greatly assisted by 10 Savennières in that top 49, which made this AP the most successful, underlining its reputation for making the finest Loire Chenin. Domaine des Baumard's Clos du Papillon 2007 is a pointer to Savennières' ageing potential. Coulée de Serrant from biodynamic champion Nicolas Joly in Savennières remains a controversial wine. His 2014 (which scored an average 86 points) divided the panel with scores of 93, 79 and 86. Château de Passavant gets less media attention than some more high-profile Loire Chenin producers, so it is good to see its 2014 Jarret de Monchenin emerging as our only Outstanding wine. Montlouis had four in our top 49, again pointing out the dynamism of this small appellation. By contrast Vouvray, its much larger cousin, only had three – including one from Foreau – long one of that appellation's best producers. There would have been four Vouvrais but for the ludicrous rule that bars François Chidaine from using the Vouvray appellation because he vinifies in neighbouring Montlouis. Ironically, his Vin de France-labelled Baudoin cuvée comes from one of Vouvray's most famous sites. [D](#)

‘Our tasting demonstrated that Chenin Blanc in the Loire has a keen sense of place, with the styles of wine markedly different’

My top three

Jim Budd

■ **Domaine Ogereau, L'Enthousiasme, Savennières 2014** I discovered this estate in 1990 when Vincent and Catherine were part of the new generation restoring Anjou. Now their son Emmanuel is taking it to the next level. This is brilliant: austere but with rich fruit. **97 Drink** 2017-2030
■ **Eddy & Mileine Oosterlinck, Domaine de Juchepie, Le Clos de Juchepie, Anjou 2014** This Belgian couple moved to Anjou in 2001. Best known for their sweet wines, they also make interesting dry whites. Le Clos has rich texture, power and length balanced with '14's racy acidity. **96 Drink** 2017-2031
■ **Château de Passavant, Jarret de Montchenin, Anjou 2014** I have long admired this property, now run by Oliver Lecomte, the fourth generation of his family to own Passavant. It needs more time to show its best. **95 Drink** 2018-2027

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

My top three

Chris Kissack

■ **Michel Chevré, Clos de L'Ecotard, Saumur 2015** A little-known, underrated domaine run by Chevré, who often works with his friend Thierry Germain of Domaine des Roches Neuves. I loved the energy and vibrancy here. **94 Drink** 2017-2020
■ **Eric Nicolas, Domaine de Bellivière, Vieilles Vignes Eparses, Coteaux du Loir 2014** Nicolas is one of the most talented vigneron in the Loire, so it was no surprise to see his other 2014 Calligramme also ranked highly. But I liked this just as much, and it is a bit cheaper. **94 Drink** 2017-2025
■ **Château Pierre Bise, Savennières-Roche aux Moines 2014** Claude Papin is a master of Chenin, and of Savennières, and this cuvée, from the hallowed Roches aux Moines vineyard which has its own AC, is perhaps his greatest dry white. I loved it! **93 Drink** 2017-2025

My top three

Ben Llewelyn

■ **Eric Nicolas, Domaine de Bellivière, Calligramme, Jasnières 2014** What a wine! Calligrame is a parcel selection of 55-year-old vines from flinty clay soil on limestone and is naturally fermented in old wood. This will age but is so utterly delicious now it would be hard to leave it. **94 Drink** 2017-2030
■ **Nicolas Joly, Savennières-Coulée de Serrant, 2014** Joly has been one of the mainstays of the biodynamic movement and a godfather to the natural winemakers of today. This split us as judges but for me it was fascinating and carried so much energy and detail that it could not be ignored. **93 Drink** 2017-2032
■ **Clos de L'Elu, Ephata, Anjou 2014** Charlotte and Thomas Carsin started here in 2008 and work several old plots – this one over 60 years old, planted on sandy shale. It's one of Anjou's most exciting estates and this wine exudes the charm of Chenin. **92 Drink** 2017-2020

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