

Wine Column May 2009

Loire Valley

As warm weather returns, I start to think more about lighter wines, both red and white (interesting fact: a survey last month revealed that most woman prefer to drink red than white).

One region, that deserve for greater attention in this context is France's Loire Valley with its spectacular medieval castles and as far as wine is concerned, I suspect that most people will think of the Loire as a white wine area.

The more familiar wines include Sauvignon Blanc like Sancerre, and Pouilly Fumé, Chenin Blanc, such as Vouvray and Savennières, and Muscadet, from the western Loire near the Atlantic Ocean (made from Melon de Bourgogne grape).

Then, there are the reds:

Can you name any of them?

The most important red grape in the Loire Valley is the Cabernet Franc, here is also limited production of Pinot Noir, Gamay and Côt (as Malbec is known in the Loire), all deriving a unique character from the area's mineral rich soils.

In the Loire Valley, Cabernet Franc is not merely a blending grape, as it for the most part in Bordeaux and the Napa Valley, on the contrary, any serious discussion of Loire Reds is going to be mainly about Cabernet Franc. I have tasted recently a 2005 Saumur-Champigny from Domaine Follatreau, it was very smooth, good fruit balance (best enjoyed a little chilled). This fresh, medium-bodied wine (£11.95) charmed me with its aromas of red berry and touch of mineral from the lime stone-rich soils. Adding to its complexity is the fact this wine is not filtered and fermented in stainless steel tanks.

On that note, let's raise a glass to summer and to making the reds of the Loire, a part of your warm weather dining.

The Loire region which is made of 5 departments, was created in late 19th century to serve as a zone of influence for its capital "Nantes".

It is the third biggest wine region in France and second largest region for sparkling wines and the number one for wines ordered in restaurants in France.

This region is known as the "Jardin de la France", the most popular tourist destination in France after Paris and the "Cote d'Azur".

The Loire Region produces over 100 "Appellation d'Origine Controlée", known as AOC in all style: White, Red, Rosé, Sparkling, Dry and Sweet.

The annual AOC production is around 3 millions Hectolitres for about 80 thousand Hectares.

My wine recommendation:

- 1) – MENNETOU-SALON Morogues, Domaine Henry Pellé, £8.95
- 2) – MUSCADET DE SEVRE ET MAINE, Clos des Allées, £6.50
- 3) – SAUMUR-CHAMPIGNY (Bio Dynamic), Thierry Germain, £8.95

All available from: sales@lescaves.co.uk

Cheers,

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Forbury's restaurant & Wine Bar