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TASTING ARTICLES

LOIRE

SANCERRE

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PINOT NOIR



The greening of Sancerre



Vineyards, and wines, have been changing in Sancerre, Pouilly and their satellites. The hilltop town of Sancerre can be seen above in the distance behind Jancis and Florencia. More on Saturday,

I enjoyed a whistle-stop tour of growers in the group of appellations and IGPs officially known as Centre-Loire earlier this month. I tasted wines from Sancerre and the similar-but-smaller Pouilly-Fumé appellation of course but also a Pouilly-sur-Loire made from Chasselas (not up to Switzerland's best), Coteaux du Giennois, Menetou-Salon, Quincy, Reuilly and the newish, Gamay-dominated Châteaumeillant. I was shown on a map the location of the new IGPs Coteaux de Tannay and Côtes de la Charité (east and south-east of Pouilly respectively) but didn't taste any wines from them on this trip, although I see The Wine Society was showing a [Pinot Noir](#) from the latter recently. See our *World Atlas of Wine* maps of the [Loire Valley](#) and [Sancerre and Pouilly](#) to get your bearings.



The vineyards had changed considerably since I last visited many years ago. Florencia Gomez and I stayed in the Hotel Panoramic in Sancerre, so called because from the hilltop town of Sancerre it gives this panorama of the great sweep of vineyards to the west (see below). So uniformly green were the cover crops that from the breakfast room the first morning I was convinced there were no vineyards there. As Luc Prieur volunteered when we visited him at Domaine Paul Prieur, 'It's great to see all that green. I'm glad there is now such energy in Sancerre.' He already has two horses to help look after his 19.5 ha (48 acres) and was particularly grateful for them this spring when heavy, continuous rain meant that his vineyards were too muddy for tractors.

Single-vineyard wines are all the rage in Centre-Loire now and he is proud to be showcasing on his labels some lieux-dits that he feels deserve prominence even if they were not famous historically. Les Monts Damnés in Chavignol is arguably the most famous vineyard and is located above arguably the most famous of Sancerre's little villages, partly thanks to its goat-cheese *crottins*. Like most of the famous vineyards, it is on a slope that was too steep for the mixed farming that used to proliferate on flatter land, so viticulture was the only choice. Prieur has some vines in Les Monts Damnés, and says he is grateful in this era of warmer summers that they are on the cooler, east side.

Most unusually for Sancerre, where all the potential land is already planted, Prieur was offered 'a beautiful chance to buy another two hectares in Chavignol. But 19.5 ha is the maximum size for efficiency here. My grandparents already had 11 ha in the 1950s and in the 1990s my parents added 5 ha of silex [flint-based soil]. I wanted to be able to continue to be able to hand-harvest.'



He is one of several growers who insist on picking by hand rather than machine, and says he's able to attract more or less the same team of French pickers each year by offering them a party atmosphere with a big tent, plenty of music and, I assume, good wine. His wines were some of the best we tasted, and his cavernous cellar by far the most glamorous, complete with tasting room, seven clay amphorae, four giant glass spheres and oak of several sizes. He reckons the demi-muid is the minimum size suitable for a wine as delicate as Sancerre Blanc. Like an increasing number of Centre-Loire growers he is certified organic but says he doesn't agree sufficiently with Rudolf Steiner to go biodynamic.

One of the most impressive set of wines we tasted, however, came from the certified biodynamic, and organic, Domaine Tabordet in the village of Verdigny. Intense Marius Tabordet explained he has 5 ha (12 acres) in Sancerre, 16 ha (40 acres) in the Pouilly-Fumé appellation, makes a dozen different cuvées and tries to taste every barrel every week.

He was only the second vigneron we encountered in our short trip and he opened our eyes to the fact that, in general, those making Sauvignon Blanc wines here like to suppress the malolactic conversion, maintaining acidity as high as possible. He's an exception, however, and explained how, inspired by Dauvissat in Chablis, he decided to encourage the malo, preferably at the same time as his long alcoholic fermentation, before Christmas. As biodynamic viticulture has taken hold in the vineyard, his malo starts much earlier than it used to, and final total acidity is virtually unaffected.



Another very impressive producer was Paul-Henry Pellé (pictured above) in Menetou-Salon, a south-western extension of Sancerre where land is still very much cheaper because the name is much less famous. Of all the producers encountered, he seems to have the best distribution in the UK – though many of them have better distribution in the US (almost a third of all exports) than the UK (less than a fifth).

Like so many vigneronns here, he studied in Beaune in Burgundy and not Tours in the Loire. He has come back home determined to make fine red wine from the Pinot Noir vines that are planted on 27% of Menetou-Salon's vineyard (and 18% of Sancerre's). So Burgundian is he in fact that during our visit he served his reds before his whites, as is the usual way on the Côte d'Or.

Along with single-vineyard bottlings (begun as early as 1996 chez Pellé), spontaneous fermentation, much-reduced use of agrochemicals and associated certification, and making white wines designed to age 5–15 years, the production of serious red wine based on Pinot Noir is one of the current developments in Sancerre and Menetou-Salon. (Pouilly is focused on white wine.)

Like Prieur, another red-wine devotee, Pellé is determined to stick with hand-picking. He says he needs about 100 people at harvest time for his 42 ha (104 acres) and that Facebook and Instagram help with the recruitment process. He gives them an idea of the likely start-of-harvest date as soon as flowering takes place, as it's usually 95 days later. He, incidentally, has a strong biodiversity strategy and is busy introducing not just trees in the vineyards but livestock too.



Séverin Chollet of Domaine Séverin & Gilles Chollet (his *tisonière* for dynamising biodynamic preparations is pictured above) had earlier assured us of the advantage of a mechanical harvester – notably last year when a sudden heatwave in early September advanced the ideal picking dates considerably from what had been predicted. He expects biodynamic certification next year so we were rather surprised that he is allowed to pick by machine. He explained that he incurs a penalty by so doing but that according to his biodynamic certification, he's allowed five penalties a year, others being applied if total sulphur levels are too high, cultured yeasts or bentonite fining are used, or the wine is filtered. He seemed quite prepared to incur a few penalties along the way!



Domaine Séverin & Gilles Chollet in Pouilly-sur-Loire have installed a demonstration of the three main soil types there (left to right): terres blanches, caillottes and sand (silex, or flint, is more common in Sancerre)

Like the famously varied soils of Centre-Loire, recent vintages have differed considerably. 2023 required vigneron to make many a significant decision. As elsewhere in Europe, winter and spring were notably wet so vineyards were very difficult to work. Summer was not as punishingly hot as 2022 but there was that demanding heat spike in early September which accelerated ripening and made picking decisions very difficult.

2022 was extremely hot and dry and made fleshier, earlier-maturing wines than usual. Because the 2021 vintage was shrunk by frost (by 70% at Domaine Daniel Reverdy, for example) and low temperatures resulted in rather light-bodied wines, especially the reds, as in Burgundy – the opposite of the 2022s – many 2022s had to be bottled early. But demand for these wines, especially for the biggest, most famous appellation Sancerre, is so consistent that this has required relatively early bottling of the 2023s, too. Luc Prieur pointed out that 2020 and 2022 were the region's first August harvests, so to enliven his wines he left more CO₂ in them than usual – about 1,500 mg/l rather than the usual 1,000 mg/l.

When I quizzed locals about outside investment, all they could think of were acquisitions by companies in Anjou-Touraine. Domaine Brochard, a big landowner with 70 ha (173 acres) of vineyard, was sold to Bollinger's Loire subsidiary Langlois-Château and the extensive Château de Sancerre now belongs to Ackermann. Domaine Fournier is part of the Villebois portfolio of Loire properties.

This is a land of small-scale vigneron rather than big companies. They have long had reason to feel confident that there is demand for their wines but currently seem keen to bedazzle rather than just satisfy knowledgeable wine drinkers.

The 76 wines below are grouped by producer, in alphabetical order, followed by a final group of wines tasted at dinner, as follows:

- [Séverin & Gilles Chollet](#)
- [Lucien Crochet](#)
- [Domaine Hubert](#)
- [Domaine Pellé](#)
- [Paul Prieur et Fils](#)
- [Philippe Rimbault](#)
- [Daniel Reverdy et Fils](#)
- [Domaine Tabordet](#)
- [Les Domaines Tatin](#)
- [dinner wines](#)

Within each group the wines are in the order they were tasted.

Séverin & Gilles Chollet

Wines presented by Séverin Chollet. Imported into the UK by Halo Wines.

Séverin & Gilles Chollet 2022 Pouilly-sur-Loire 15.5

Chasselas aged four months on lees. Chollet used to have problems with reduction but he thinks keeping different press lots separate has cured this.

Broad and smoky on the nose but pretty neutral on the palate. Quite a bit of acid. 11%

Drink 2024 – 2025

Séverin & Gilles Chollet 2023 Pouilly-Fumé 16

Blend of grapes from three types of soil – terres blanches, caillottes and sand – in equal parts.

Mineral nose. Then chiselled blackcurrant fruit on the palate which ends quite chewy. Still pretty youthful and not very obviously biodynamic. 12.5%

Drink 2025 – 2027

Séverin & Gilles Chollet, Les Sables 2022 Pouilly-Fumé 16.5

Gold medal DWWA 2023.

Green notes on the nose. Then lots of blackcurrant leaves on the palate. Dry finish after a hint of lychees. Interesting! 13%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Séverin & Gilles Chollet, Les Caillottes 2023 Pouilly-Fumé**16.5**

He's already sold out of the 2022.

Light nose and pure fruit that's still in its infancy. Firm and unformed. Bone-dry, long finish.

Drink 2025 – 2029

Séverin & Gilles Chollet, Les Terres Blanches 2022 Pouilly-Fumé**16.5 +**

Pretty, edgy nose. Chiselled fruit and lots to chew on. Still quite youthful.

Drink 2025 – 2030

Séverin & Gilles Chollet, Oxygène 2021 Pouilly-Fumé**15**

Debut vintage of Séverin Chollet's natural wine based on 20-year-old vines on terres blanches. 20 mg/l total SO₂. Absolutely no additives! One lot developed maladie de la graisse (which Pasteur identified as production of a polysaccharide) and he showed us an oily liquid.

Lots of personality! Slightly stale nose – because the fruit hasn't been preserved by SO₂? Lost a bit of a fruit towards the end.

Drink 2022 – 2024

Lucien Crochet

Wines presented by Clément Bizet, technical director. Imported into the UK by Justerini & Brooks and Berkmann Wine Cellars; into the US by Rosenthal.

Lucien Crochet 2022 Sancerre**16**

Blend of the three different soils. Mainly caillottes and some griottes and clay-limestone. Harvest started end August.

Intense, fruity nose. Maybe a bit too ripe. No residual sugar even though it tastes like it. Even a little bitter on the end. Atypical Sancerre! 14.5%

Drink 2024 – 2026

£23.40 Justerini & Brooks

Lucien Crochet, Les Calcaires 2022 Sancerre**16**

Blend of different calcareous terroirs. Unoaked.

More lift and tension than the domaine bottling but still quite big, and chewy on the end. A little mineral on the end but quite a bruiser. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2027

Lucien Crochet, Le Chêne Marchand 2019 Sancerre 16

Cool nights made for very good balance. 10% aged in barrel.

Good, mineral, high-toned, lively nose. But still quite big – gooseberry juice!

Then slight bitterness. Still slightly chewy. 14.5%

Drink 2022 – 2026

Lucien Crochet, Cuvée Prestige 2022 Sancerre 16.5

A single plot in Bué on griottes, 70-year-old vines. All oaked, 5% new. 12 months in barrel and six months in tank. Made only in the best vintages and the plot can change between vintages. This is Grands Champs. Sold in wooden cases.

Still tastes of spicy oak. Rich and sweet. And a little bitter on the end. 14%

Drink 2025 – 2029

Lucien Crochet, Le Chêne Marchand 2015 Sancerre 16.5

Unoaked. From the first really hot vintage in Sancerre. 2016 was the first oaked vintage.

This does smell very mature – Cotat-like in a way – another style of Sancerre.

Waxy, pleasing and dry on the end. 14%

Drink 2019 – 2025

Lucien Crochet, Le Chêne Marchand 2010 Sancerre 17

Unoaked.

A little smoky/reduced on the nose. Racy and edgy. Very different from the 2015!

Still quite nervy. Proof of Sancerre's ageing ability. 13%

Drink 2015 – 2026

Lucien Crochet, Rosé 2023 Sancerre 16

Made like the whites. 30% in large casks for the first time.

Pale greyish pink. No obvious oak. Lots of guts. Interesting! 13%

Drink 2024 – 2026

Lucien Crochet, La Croix du Roi 2019 Sancerre 15.5

Blend of calcareous and clay-limestone soils. One-month maceration. Aged for 12 months in burgundy pièces of which a small percentage were new.

Rather raw and Gamay-like on the nose. Juicy start. Sweet and almost treacly!

Quite chewy end. 14.5%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Lucien Crochet, Cuvée Prestige 2016 Sancerre 16.5

Single vineyard that changes between the vintages it's made. Old vines on calcareous soils. One year in oak and barrels either new or one year old. 'We have less limestone in Bué than Burgundy and the soils are of different ages.'
Smells of pure Pinot. Plus a little oak. Quite nicely harmonised. 14%
Drink 2021 – 2027

Lucien Crochet, La Croix du Roi 2012 Sancerre 15.5

Smells rather agricultural. Lots of jewelry/candified fruit. Drying out on the end.
13%
Drink 2016 – 2023

Lucien Crochet, Cuvée Prestige 2005 Sancerre 15

Not that unlike a 2005 red burgundy. A bit bitter on the end though not the thin, scrawny thing that I used to think Sancerre Rouge was. But the fruit has faded. 13.5%
Drink 2009 – 2019

Lucien Crochet, Cuvée Prestige 2002 Sancerre 16

Very light nose. Lots of acidity and freshness but there's a purity here. Savoury finish. 13%
Drink 2007 – 2022

Domaine Hubert

Wines presented by Maxime Hubert.

Dom Hubert 2022 Quincy 16.5

100% Sauvignon Blanc. (2023 is just bottled). Hubert's second white. He found an old farmer who rented him a vineyard. 20-year-old vines planted on sandstone and sand. Cultured yeast because ambient yeast is too risky. Low SO₂ additions but lots of CO₂. 60 hl/ha so the concentration is not from low yield.
Deep straw. Intense. Yellow plums. Real texture and rather beguiling fruit and personality. Bite on the end. 12.5%
Drink 2024 – 2027

Dom Hubert, Gris 2023 Châteaumeillant

16

60% Gamay, 35% Pinot Noir, 5% Pinot Gris. If you want to call a rosé gris, it needs to be directly pressed, not saignée. Fermentation at <18 °C.

Pale greyish pink. Nose is a bit obviously cultured yeast and candified. Tastes a little sweet but is actually dry apparently. Lightly bitter on the end. 12.5%

Drink 2024 – 2026

Dom Hubert 2021 Châteaumeillant

16

70% Gamay, 30% Pinot Noir. Gamay has to be at least 60% of the vineyard so >60% in the wine usually. But if you increase the percentage of Pinot, you still have lots of Gamay to decide what to do with. Unoaked and all destemmed.

Dull greyish garnet. Nose is quite agricultural, then peppery, and then a little tart on the palate – like a cool-vintage Beaujolais. He says this wine appeals to white-wine drinkers. Light charge of sandy tannins on the end. He seems to have got the balance right between fruit, acid and tannin but the 2022 is less light and spicy apparently. 12.5%

Drink 2024 – 2026

Dom Hubert, Artifice 2020 Châteaumeillant

16.5

100% Gamay. Cold maceration pre fermentation and another after. 12 months in barrels of one and two years old. Not made in 2021 because the crop was too small. Single vineyard of gneiss, schist with sand on the top. First part of Massif Central with a little volcanic soil is especially interesting for Gamay. Coteaux du Giennois can have Gamay too but in Châteaumeillant Gamay dominates. Only 1,000 bottles made.

Confident, healthy crimson. Pure Gamay with a little brush of oak over it.

Exciting and definitely not Beaujolais. Spicy and confident. Long. Quite rich and polished with obvious structure. 14%

Drink 2024 – 2030

€15 cellar door

Domaine Pellé

Wines presented by Paul-Henry Pellé. Sold in the UK by Boutinot, Les Caves de Pyrène, Waitrose, The Wine Society, H2Vin; imported into the US by Polaner Selections, Elite Wines and others.

Dom Pellé, Les Bornés 2022 Menetou-Salon

16.5

Four plots, average 40 years, 10% in old oak

Pure, light nose. Lots of fine fruit. Juicy. More fruity than mineral. Crisp and well defined. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Dom Pellé 2022 Menetou-Salon Morogues

17

10% in old oak. Seven different plots. 50 m above the vineyard that supplies the village bottling, at 450–500 m with forest around it so it's nicely cooled. 100,000 bottles

Blackcurrant-leaf nose. Good tension. A real mouthful. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2028

£16 The Wine Society

Dom Pellé, Vignes de Ratier 2022 Menetou-Salon Morogues

17

Gets the afternoon sun, sited on rock. 100% oaked. Kimmeridgian. 7,000 bottles,

No evidence of oak – well done! Transparent but different from – perhaps broader – rather than better than the regular Morogues. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2030

Dom Pellé, Le Carroir 2022 Menetou-Salon Morogues

17.5

Flint and mass selection. Faces east.

Quite pungent. Very intriguing and mouth-filling. Very salivatory. Lots of character. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2032

Dom Pellé, Les Blanchais 2022 Menetou-Salon

16.5

East-facing mass selection. Deep Kimmeridgian marl with some clay and flint.

Quite intense, deep-flavoured nose. Bone-dry finish. Less fruit in the middle than some. Perhaps it needs time to take on some flesh? Citrus peel.

Drink 2025 – 2032

Dom Pellé, Vignes de Ratier 2021 Menetou-Salon Morogues **16.5**

Focused and greener than the 2022. Capsicum nose and some direct fruit on the palate. Correct but not for hedonists. 13%

Drink 2025 – 2030

Dom Pellé, Les Blanchais 2020 Menetou-Salon **17.5**

Vibrantly fruity on the nose. Lots of charm and richness. Assertive. Lovely now.

Long. 13%

Drink 2023 – 2028

Dom Pellé 2008 Menetou-Salon Morogues **16**

Deep straw. Pungent truffle notes on the nose! But with vegy notes too. Paul-Henry Pellé suggests it's like a Riesling but it's more vegy. Losing freshness.

Drink 2012 – 2020

Dom Pellé, Les Bornés 2022 Menetou-Salon **16.5**

Four plots, average 40 years old on deep Kimmeridgian soil. 100% foudres after a one-month maceration. 9 months in foudres, then racking and blending and a few months in stainless steel. Less extraction nowadays.

Bright mid garnet. Fresh and vibrant on the nose. Juicy pure fruit with some sweetness. Crackling fruit. Not that long but absolutely bullseye wine-bar wine.

Super-fresh finish. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2027

Dom Pellé 2022 Menetou-Salon Morogues **16.5**

Blend of four plots on the hillside opposite the winery. Quite a fresh site with fairly shallow soils.

Pale garnet, and quite a sweet jewel of a wine. Not the most serious Pinot but very attractive, pure fruit and still quite a bit of fine tannin on the slightly

sudden finish. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2030

Dom Pellé, Le Carroir 2021 Menetou-Salon Morogues 16.5

2-ha site on 100% flint – the only one in the village. Paul-Henri Pellé's grandfather had a nursery for Sancerre growers and this vineyard is planted with a mass selection from there. 20% whole bunch (more in warmer vintages). The 2020 will be released after the leaner 2021 (an exceptionally cool vintage).

Pale crimson. Very lively and fresh fruit. Pretty, but no long finish. 13%
Drink 2024 – 2029

Dom Pellé, Les Cris 2021 Menetou-Salon Morogues 16

Mass selection in the vineyard immediately above the winery. One month's maceration. 40% in barrels and the rest in foudres.

Fairly lightweight. Sandy tannins on the bone-dry finish. Lots to chew on. The opposite of luscious. 13%
Drink 2026 – 2034

Dom Pellé, Le Carroir 2020 Menetou-Salon Morogues 16.5

100% flint.

Rich and round but not heavy. Lively. Pretty. Textured. 13.5%
Drink 2024 – 2030

Dom Pellé, Les Cris 2014 Menetou-Salon Morogues 15

The first two bottles opened were spoilt by TCA. Pellé keeps 100 bottles back for 10 years and then sells them.

A little dry on the finish. Where's the fruit? Is this a mild TCA symptom? 12.5%
Drink 2018 – 2023

Dom Pellé, Les Cris 2012 Menetou-Salon Morogues 17

100% whole bunch. Two months maceration.

Pretty, evolved nose and well balanced and long. This has aged very well. Good acidity but lots of fine fruit. Again, though, like Pellé Pinots in general, not that long. 12.5%
Drink 2016 – 2026

Dom Pellé 2010 Menetou-Salon Morogues 16

Pale ruby. Transparent and a little dry on the end. Pure fruit. Good for a 14-year-old wine. 12.5%
Drink 2014 – 2022

Paul Prieur et Fils

Wines presented by Luc Prieur. Imported into the UK by Lay & Wheeler and Thorman Hunt; imported into the US by T Edward Wines (New York) and Becky Wasserman.

Paul Prieur et Fils 2023 Sancerre

17

Always same blend. 40% silex, 40% caillottes, 20% terres blanches. Unoaked though some portion is fermented in oak barrels destined for Pinot Noir. Usually the most accessible cuvée. 2023 was a big vintage. First bottling will be May 2024.

Wild flowers and glamorous nose. Really attention-grabbing! Long and rich.

Drink 2024 – 2029

Paul Prieur et Fils, Pieuchaud Silex 2023 Sancerre

17

Silex terroir. Paul Prieur was the first to isolate this lieu-dit. Prieur is looking for extra ripeness in silex to counterbalance the tension. On lees for 12 months, then blended and it will be bottled in January 2025.

Nervy, very cool and pure.

Drink 2025 – 2030

Paul Prieur et Fils, Monts Damnés 2023 Sancerre

17

Concentrated on the palate but restrained on the nose. Blackcurrant leaves and coolness. Very refined.

Drink 2026 – 2036

Paul Prieur et Fils, La Pitaude 2023 Sancerre

17

Kimmeridgian, same line and soil as Monts Damnés. (The Raimbault brothers are on the same line.) The vineyard has been impacted by court noué. If they ever pull the vines out they will need to leave it fallow for 10–15 years to get rid of vectors. The vineyard was planted for centuries so it produces very small berries and a very small yield, 15–20 hl/ha. This bottling was an experiment initially but has worked through both hot and cool vintages since 2016.

Big on the palate with lots of concentrated blackcurrant-leaf flavour. Really chewy. Long. A bit of a powerhouse.

Drink 2025 – 2034

Paul Prieur et Fils 2022 Sancerre

16.5

40% malo – though no malo on the single-vineyard wines.

Intense and beautifully balanced on the nose. Racy and sleek and gorgeous. A hint of bitterness on the end. Green notes but a little less pronounced than usual.

Drink 2024 – 2030

£23.61 Lay & Wheeler

Paul Prieur et Fils, Pieuchaud Silex 2022 Sancerre

17

Pieu meant slope.

Polished and tense. Bone dry. Not the juiciest. Lots to chew on. Not ready, but intriguing and promising.

Drink 2025 – 2032

Paul Prieur et Fils, Monts Damnés 2022 Sancerre

17.5

Very intense green notes on the nose. Rich and polished and really gorgeous. Long.

Drink 2024 – 2032

Paul Prieur et Fils, La Pitaude 2022 Sancerre

17

High toned and sleek. Very polished. Dry chalky finish. Green notes. Youthful still.

Drink 2026 – 2036

Paul Prieur et Fils, La Pitaude 2021 Sancerre

16.5

Green-leaves flavours. This is pretty ripe for a 2021 but still tasted of slightly underripe Sauvignon Blanc. 13%

Drink 2024 – 2030

£57.21 Lay & Wheeler

Paul Prieur et Fils, Rosé NV Sancerre

16

60% 2022 and 40% a solera that goes back to 2016! Prieur wants less of 'that amylic nose so common in rosés'.

No nose but precise and grippy.

Drink 2024 – 2027

Paul Prieur et Fils, Vinification en Grappes Entières 2021 Sancerre **16**

'Consumers in the US, Paris, Scandinavia all love this. Those in the south of France don't understand it at all', according to Prieur.

Powerful aroma recalls cough linctus – spicy and medicinal. Low tannin and with some vegy notes. Finishes a bit suddenly. 12%

Drink 2023 – 2027

£25.41 Lay & Wheeler

Paul Prieur et Fils, Vinification en Grappes Entières 2022 Sancerre **17**

Thanks to experiencing the cool 2021 vintage, Prieur does shorter macerations for extra accessibility. Started picking 6 September. 100% whole bunch. 70% oak of 1–10 years' age. 30% amphora which helps if vintages are small. Lots of press wine but it hasn't been in contact with stems.

Slightly candified on the nose. Rich and sweet and very accessible and charming. *Sui generis* with lots of energy, texture and persistence. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Paul Prieur et Fils, Grains de Pinot 2022 Sancerre **16.5 +**

30% whole bunch. Same grapes as Vinification en Grappes Entières but different vinification. Usually contains 15% press wine.

Intense nose of wild berries. Structured and a little raw. Racy and still youthful and with a little tannin. Slightly sudden end. 13.5%

Drink 2026 – 2033

Paul Prieur et Fils, Les Pichons 2022 Sancerre **17**

From a low-yielding limestone bit of his vineyard. 100% destemmed and millerandé.

Intense and round and great grip. Exciting! 14%

Drink 2025 – 2036

Paul Prieur et Fils, Grains de Pinot 2020 Sancerre **16.5 +**

Longer maceration than vintages after 2021, a light vintage which taught him to try shorter macerations.

Round and sweet and a bit less ethereal than later vintages. Bit beefy and definitely youthful.

Drink 2025 – 2034

Paul Prieur et Fils, Vinification en Grappes Entières 2016 Sancerre

16.5

Was reduced so it was not put on the market for quite a time.

Raspberry flavours, seems very much younger than 2016, but is certainly drinkable now. Long and satisfying.

Drink 2023 – 2027

Philippe Raimbault

Wines presented by Perrine Raimbault. Imported into the UK by Whitebridge Wines.

Philippe Raimbault 2022 Coteaux du Giennois

16.5

Sauvignon Blanc grown on flinty-clay over limestone – distinctive. Spontaneous fermentation. Usually quite light. Terra Vitis certified.

Powerful floral nose. Very nicely balanced. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2026

Philippe Raimbault, Apud Sariaicum 2022 Sancerre

16.5

Their entry-level Sancerre, called by the old name of a village near Sancerre.

Limestone clay. Vinification finished close to Christmas thanks to ambient yeast. (The 2023 has just been bottled.)

Mineral nose and a fine, structured palate. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Philippe Raimbault, Les Godons 2022 Sancerre

16

Single plot in an amphitheatre so very ripe, less mineral and lower acid. Limestone clay.

Lots of ripe fruit and not that recognisable as a Sancerre – fatter. Yellow plums with a hint of cassis. 13%

Drink 2023 – 2026

Philippe Raimbault, Les Chasseignes 2022 Sancerre

16

Barrel-fermented. Aged for one year in barrels with a mix of ages. Made only in the ripest vintages. A love-or-loathe wine. Some see it as a cheaper alternative to white burgundy. Just 1,000 bottles made.

Spicy oak on the nose. Some light oak tannin on the end. 14%

Drink 2026 – 2030

Philippe Rimbault, Apud Sariaicum 2022 Sancerre

15 +

100% whole bunch. Oaked over one year.

Mid garnet. Smells a little raw. And marked acidity and fine tannin on the end.

Rather stringy and hard work. And a little skinny on the mid palate. 14%

Drink 2027 – 2031

Daniel Reverdy et Fils

Wines presented by Cyrille Reverdy. The classic white Sancerre is imported into the UK by Laithwaites, with their own plain white label.

Daniel Reverdy & Fils 2023 Sancerre

15.5

65,000 bottles made of his classic wine from 35-year-old vines at 60 hl/ha.

Machine picked. 40% from grassed vineyards. Aged on lees for six months. Bottled February 2024.

Solid and a bit chewy. Not that long. 12.6%

Drink 2024 – 2026

£TBC Laithwaites

Daniel Reverdy & Fils, Le Clos de Chaudenay 2022 Sancerre

16

Medaille d'Or Paris 2024. From the west-facing parcel next to the cellar. Unoaked. 35-year-old vines on terres blanches, 55 hl/ha. The vineyard is all grassed. Aged on lees for eight months. 6,000 bottles. This has been bottled as a separate cuvée since 2017. Bottled in September 2023.

Quite intense fruit on the palate with high acidity. Much more concentration than the classic cuvée though still not creamy but chewy. 12.7%

Drink 2024 – 2027

Daniel Reverdy & Fils, Anthéa 2020 Sancerre

16.5

Old vines from three parcels of which one was planted in 1947, the others in 1966. 50% oak-aged in this ripe vintage.

Light note of savoury oak on the nose and fine acidity. Fine grip on the end.

Broad and satisfying. Quite intense. 14%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Daniel Reverdy & Fils, Anthéa 2019 Sancerre

16.5

Fragrant and evolved nose. Spreads widely on the palate. A bit more classic than the 2020 but also more attenuated. Good acidity. 13%

Drink 2023 – 2026

Daniel Reverdy & Fils, P'tit Luce 2019 Sancerre

17

Three-day cold maceration and then a one-week fermentation followed by 1–3 weeks' maceration. 80% was aged for 18 months in a mix of ages of oak casks, just one out of four new. Reverdy's grandfather was called Luce but he was short, hence the name.

Bright crimson. Very sweet palate entry and wonderfully smooth! Fresh but very fruity. Nice purity and structure. 13%

Drink 2023 – 2028

Daniel Reverdy & Fils, P'tit Luce 2020 Sancerre

16.5

40 hl/ha. Cold pre-fermentation maceration for three days at 6 °C. Longer in tank than the 2019 before 100% ageing in oak for 12 months. 65-year-old vines. 1,500 bottles produced.

Intense raspberry notes – a bit more savage than the 2019. Not yet ready and with lots of tannin still. 14%

Drink 2025 – 2031

Domaine Tabordet

Wines presented by Marius Tabordet. Imported into the UK by Majestic and Hallgarten & Novum Wines.

Dom Tabordet 2023 Pouilly-Fumé

17

Blend of three terroirs on clay limestone and flint. Marius Tabordet claims that fermentations as long as his, which usually last until Christmas, are possible only if the fruit is nourished by healthy soil. Bottled recently, to be released May 2024.

Organic. This wine is sold by Majestic as Domaine des Patureaux Organic Pouilly-Fumé. Certified organic and biodynamic (Demeter).

Complex wild-flowers nose. Great grip and texture on the palate. Lots of character. 12.5%

Drink 2024 – 2034

£19.99 (2022) Majestic

Dom Tabordet, Les Petites Aubues 2023 Pouilly-Fumé

17.5

In far north of AOC in St-Martin-sur-Nohain on a special type of 'plaquettes' of limestone that drain especially well. Ripens fast. Total SO₂ 30–45 mg/l. Certified organic and biodynamic (Demeter).

Very mineral nose and dry finish with real salinity. Already good to drink but will clearly age. 14%

Drink 2024 – 2032

Dom Tabordet, Les Champs des Chaumes 2022 Pouilly-Fumé

16.5

Savennières Roche aux Moines was the inspiration. From Boisfleury (centrally positioned E–W in the north of the AOC). Kimmeridgian marls with their tiny oyster shells, so-called terres blanches. 10–15 mg/l free SO₂. Certified organic and biodynamic (Demeter).

Intense nose. Chewy end but lots of character. A little soft on the finish. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2028

€24 cellar door

Les Domaines Tatin

Wines presented by Maroussia Tatin. Some wines imported into the UK by Dreyfus Ashby.

Les Domaines Tatin, Les Demoiselles Tatin Gris 2023 Reuilly

16 +

Medaille d'Or Paris. This is Pinot Gris but Pinot Noir is allowed too. White-wine vinification. Three to four hours of skin contact. When Maroussia came back to the domaine she tried to reject the yeast that made it taste like candy but people liked it. She tried ambient yeast for this but reduction was a problem. Needs two or three years in bottle. It's difficult to sell because it's a pink wine with a white price.

Very pale indeed! Very perfumed. But still quite chewy. Easy to see a relation with Alsace Pinot Gris. There is a hint of candy now. 13.5%

Drink 2024 – 2027

Les Domaines Tatin, Les Demoiselles Tatin 2023 Reuilly

16.5

Blend of mass-selection vines. Mainly chalk this vintage. They lost one-third of the production to hail. Then there was a September heatwave. Yields all over the place. Half of the tanks went through malo.

Introvert nose. Notably dry. Nose of pineapple and tropical fruit. Unusual in Reuilly Blanc but so are heatwaves. Chalky, long finish. 12.5%

Drink 2024 – 2028

Les Domaines Tatin, Les Demoiselles Tatin 2023 Reuilly **16**

Unoaked Pinot Noir designed to be easy to drink. Tatin may try a barrel or two in the future. Clay and a bit of limestone. A blend that is mainly from Preuilly.

Pale grey-garnet. Very fruity, sweet nose. Juicy palate. More terroir than grape.

12.5%

Drink 2024 – 2027

Les Domaines Tatin, Cuvée de Pé Miniau 2019 Reuilly **17**

Pinot Noir. 30% press juice (cf 15% in the Demoiselles Tatin bottling). Named after the grandfather of her father! Just released.

Transparent greyish garnet. Very rich and sweet on the nose. Round and flattering. Just a very nice, interesting drink! Medium length. 13.5%

Drink 2023 – 2028

Les Domaines Tatin Genouillet 2022 Vin de France **16**

Genouillet is a local red wine grape that is being replanted. Tressot from the Yonne and Gouais Blanc are antecedents. Very vigorous. Needs a low yield. Tatin leaves it alone in the cellar. She thinks it tastes a bit like Noah.

Deep, lively crimson. A bit tart on the end but full of character. Sudden finish.

Perfect for a natural-wine bar?

Drink 2024 – 2026

Dinner wines at La Pomme d'Or

On our last night we were taken to dinner at La Pomme d'Or, an excellent ambitious restaurant in the little town of Sancerre (population 2,000). Below is the intricate and delicious dessert. We were told that they change its formulation according to the biodynamic calendar.



Julien et Clément Rimbault, La Montée de St-Romble 2018 Sancerre

15.5

From Domaine du Pré Semelé in Sury-en-Vaux 5 km north of Sancerre on terres blanches.

So evolved that the acidity has declined in impact. The texture is a bit oily though the structure is very burgundian. Not the most refreshing Sancerre I tasted during my visit.

Drink 2020 – 2024

Serge Laloue, Cuvée Silex 2022 Sancerre

17.5

The common belief is that wines grown on silex, or flint, need careful treatment and extra ageing but this was showing splendidly – very vibrant and dramatic, and perhaps the hot 2022 vintage gave it extra ripeness and precociousness but I preferred it to the 2018 served first. Really tense and bright-fruited.

Drink 2024 – 2029

Henri Bourgeois, Le Graveron 2018 Sancerre

16 +

From a 1.3-ha plot at the top of Les Monts Damnés. Current release. Hand-picked and put through an optical sorter. Macerated in a wooden fermentation vessel with 30% whole bunches. Fermented at 25–26 °C and aged in fat-cigar-shaped barrels plus one clay vessel. This vintage carries the old label 'Famille Bourgeois'.

Spicy oak nose and some oak tannins on the palate. Sweet fruit underneath. Still a little youthful and chunky. 14.5%

Drink 2026 – 2032