

Tasting Notes
May 2018 Pick-up
Wines of the Loire Valley



The May 2018 Smart Wine Club pickup is here! You'll enjoy 6 bottles featuring classic varietals from the Loire Valley in France. I was lucky enough to travel through several regions of western France during the second half of April. The wine in France is so delicious and so reasonably priced it almost makes me wonder why I drink wine from anywhere else! I especially loved the wines from the Loire Valley region – the whites are crisp and bright, and the reds are elegant and subtle. These are wines that beg to be enjoyed with food, and I can't wait for you to try them.

French wines are typically labelled by region rather than grape. I've included info about the region/name of the wine as well as the name of the grape for each.

Don't forget to open your Smart Wine Club wines with your local-area friends and tell them about this great value club. We are happy to welcome new members anytime! As always, if you find something in this selection that you especially love, we can almost always order more for you – just let us know.

- **NV Moncontour, Crémant de Loire Brut Rosé** – I visited this winery in the heart of Vouvray, was toured about by the charming Thibault, and eventually tasted all their wines including this one. A crémant is basically a sparkling wine made in certain regulated areas of France using the traditional champagne method, but not from the Champagne region. This lovely wine is a pale salmon color with very fine creamy bubbles. Great acidity and aromas of peach, citrus and red berries. It is made from 90% Cabernet Franc grapes and 10% Chenin Blanc. Reg retail: \$19 Smart price: \$17

Pronunciation: This style of wine is pronounced cray-MON duh lwar

Pairing: Absolutely perfect as an aperitif or with very light fruit desserts. Lovely with salty or fried appetizers too. Try it with spicy Chinese takeout.

- **2016 Domaine Gadais Pere & Fils, Muscadet Sèvre et Maine Sur Lie** – Do you love oysters? If so, this is the bottle for you. Muscadet is THE classic oyster pairing wine, and is actually the most-produced wine from the Loire Valley. It is made from the Melon de Bourgogne grape – don't confuse Muscadet with Muscat, a completely different grape and a VERY different wine. The words Sèvre et Maine refers to the specific growing region, and Sur Lie means the wine was aged on its "lees" or yeasts, which is common for this type of wine. Totally dry, fresh, green, citrusy and flinty with a bit of a richness to the mouthfeel. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$12

Pronunciation: This type of wine is pronounced moos-cah-DAY

Pairing: Oysters!! and other shellfish...

- **2016 Bernard Fouquet, Cuvée de Silex Vouvray** – It would not be an exaggeration to say this is my favorite white wine I've tasted recently. I randomly ordered a glass of it one night in Dinan, Brittany and would have ordered another except the restaurant had run out! Wow was I happy to discover it was available here in Oregon. Bernard Fouquet, the winemaker, is known as one of the very best at capturing the essence of this grape and turning it into something spectacularly delicious. You'll experience the classic minerality of the stone-filled Vouvray-region terroir, combined with the mouthwatering acidity and bold fruitiness of 100% Chenin Blanc grape. Reg retail: \$20 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: This dry Vouvray works perfectly with creamy cheeses like triple crèmes, bries and Boursin. It is also lovely with lighter white meat dishes, especially those with a fruity or sweet/sour sauce.

- **2017 La Confrérie de Oisly & Thésée, "Les Gourmets" Touraine** – So far we've discussed two whites from the Loire region – Muscadet and Vouvray/Chenin Blanc. This final white is a good representation of the third and final white grape grown in the region: Sauvignon Blanc from the Touraine region. I hope you will enjoy the opportunity to compare the three. This is a classic-style Sauv Blanc with tangy grapefruit flavors and zesty freshness. Serve it well-chilled once the weather heats up and enjoy! Reg retail: \$11 Smart price: \$10

Pairing: This style of Sauv Blanc always tastes great with green vegetables, herbs, and tangy sauces, so try it with light, fresh dishes. Maybe pasta with pesto primavera or grilled vegetables and fish or chicken with a fresh vinaigrette?

- **2015 Bruno Dufeu Bourguell, "Grands Monts" Touraine** – Cabernet Franc is the main grape used in Loire Valley reds, so I've chosen two for you to compare. This first bottle from the Touraine region is fermented in stainless steel. It has rich structure with notes of black cherry, pepper and leather. The tannins are soft and savory. Reg retail: \$20 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: I think Cabernet Franc is the ideal summer red. It's not as heavy as Cab Sauvignon or as overtly plush and fruity as some Merlots can be. Yet it holds up well to a grilled summer dinner and is versatile. Try it with anything from BBQ chicken to burgers to lamb kebabs and I think you'll be very happy!

- **2016 M. Plouzeau Chateau Bonnellère, Chinon Rive Gauche** – Your second Cab Franc is from the Chinon area, probably the most famous red wine region in the Loire. The lovely town of Chinon is tucked along the Vienne River beneath some cliffs upon which sit the old medieval fortress. I was lucky enough to visit Caves Plouzeau where this wine is barrel-aged. The caves were amazingly carved out of the limestone cliffs beneath the fortress, and stone from the caves was then used to construct the old fortress during the 12th century. This wine smells so nice you almost want to sit there and sniff rather than taking a sip! You'll enjoy aromas of wet stones, herbs and juicy blackberries, plus lip-smacking acidity and elegant tannins. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: The classic Chinon pairing is with some delicious fresh or aged goat cheese. Who am I to argue with that?