

**Tasting Notes
August 2023 Pick-up
Loire Valley Wines**



Welcome to your August 2023 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is wine from the Loire Valley in France, truly one of my favorite wine regions.

The beautiful Loire Valley region runs along the Loire River, past historic castles, all the way from the city of Nantes on the Atlantic coast, eastward through north-central France to the city of Orléans. It covers many famous sub-regions along the way, including Vouvray, Sancerre, and Pouilly-Fumé. It is well-known as a white wine region, but there are also a variety of reds grown, most famously Cabernet Francs from the Chinon region. It is also the second-largest producer of sparkling wines in France, after Champagne. The area has a long history of wine-making since the 1st century.

You'll enjoy the following wines in this tote:

- **NV Château de Mauny Rosé Crémant de Loire Brut, Anjou** – This is a crémant sparkling wine, meaning it is produced using the same techniques as in the region of Champagne. The grapes are sourced from Anjou vineyard owned by the family since the late 18th century, including Chenin Blanc and a small amount of Grolleau. The wine is a lovely bright salmon color with fine bubbles and aromas and flavors of red berries. Very bright and fresh, well-balanced. Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13

Pairing: A few fun and unexpected pairings for a nice dry bubbly like this – fried goodies (think fish and chips, fried chicken, fried mushrooms); sushi or sashimi; and fish tacos.

- **2021 Famille Lieubeau Muscadet Gneiss de Bel Abord, Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** – Muscadet is a classic white grape of the Loire, primarily grown in the Atlantic coast regions around Nantes. The word “gneiss” in the name refers to the type of rock in the extremely rocky soils of this area. The vineyard roots literally have to struggle through meters of rock to reach their deep water source. This unusual terroir, combined with cool ocean breezes, give this wine a vibrant minerality that is very unique to this type of wine. This vintage received 93 points from Decanter magazine and is a great value. You'll enjoy delicate floral aromas and a vibrant, almost salty minerality. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: The absolute classic pairing for this wine is oysters on the half shell, but the mineral flavors are wonderful with nearly any shellfish or seafood.

- **2021 Domaine des Aubuisières, Bernard Fouquet Cuvée de Silex, Vouvray** – This classic dry Vouvray, made from 100% Chenin Blanc, is one of my favorite wines of all time. Bernard Fouquet has become very well-regarded in the wine world for making some of the best-quality Vouvray available today, and for truly capturing the essence and unique qualities of the Chenin Blanc grape. The wine has notes of tropical fruits, green apple, citrus, and flint rock with just a touch of honeyed sweetness. Fun fact – the word “silex” in the name means flint rock. Reg retail: \$22 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: This wine is lovely with a rich bloomy-rind cheese (Délice de Bourgogne at Trader Joe’s is a favorite of mine). Also perfection with a simple herb-roasted chicken.

- **2018 Domaine Pierre Riffault Sancerre Rouge, Sancerre** – The Sancerre region is most well-known for fine white wines, but about 20% of their grape production is actually red grapes, mostly Pinot Noir. This bottle is in fact 100% Pinot and I think it’s really fun and interesting to drink in comparison to the Oregon Pinots to which we’re accustomed. You’ll find surprising aromas of herbs, including camphor and mint, along with sweet dried plums and vanilla. The wine itself is silky and elegant with a long finish. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$20

Pairing: The earthiness of the Pinots from this area pair well with grilled lighter meats, such as duck or pork, as well as chicken and salmon.

- **2020 Domaine de Montcy, “Cabriole” Rouge, Cheverny** – The word “cabriole” in French means a happy little goat-like leap. Accordingly, this wine is very light and bright. The blend is approximately 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Gamay with just the tiniest hint of Malbec added. You’ll enjoy classic aromas of cherry, strawberry and raspberry as well as spiced notes. The tannins in this are very soft and velvety. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: I love to serve this type of wine just slightly chilled, and I think it’s the perfect summer red. On a hot day, make up a charcuterie and cheese board and serve this to guests, and you’ll have one very happy party with very little effort.

- **2021 Domaine Grosbois “La Cuisine de Ma Mere”, Chinon** – Chinon is the town where I stayed when I visited the Loire region, so I have fond memories of the area and of tasting lots of Cabernet Franc at wine shops and bistros there. Of course I was drawn to this bottle by the label, featuring cute kitchen tools. The name translates to “my mother’s kitchen” which is extremely lovely as well. The Grosbois brothers are known in the region for creating easy-drinking bistro wines that pair well with food. This one features blackberry flavors with hints of licorice, spice, and earthiness. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$20

Pairing: Try this with lamb, sausage, or a semi-aged goat cheese (look for Bûcheron from the Loire Valley or Humboldt Fog from Cypress Grove).