Tasting Notes
August 2026 Pick-up
Wines of the Loire Valley

willamette valley kitchen co.
smart wine club

Welcome to your August 2026 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is wine from the Loire Valley in France. It's hard to believe it's been almost 10 years since I visited that region, but I still remember how lovely it was, and how delicious the wines are. The region is famous for its crisp whites, but the reds are also elegant, and perfect for this time of year on the cusp of fall. I hope you'll love them as much as I do.

French wines are typically labelled by region rather than grape (although not always). I've included info about the region/name of the wine, as well as the name of the grape for each. The history of winemaking in the Loire Valley area dates back to Roman times, when grapes were planted around the settlement of the region around 1AD. By the 11th century and throughout the Middle Ages, wines from the region were the most sought-after in both France and Britain, even more so at that time than Bordeaux wines.

Thanks again for being a member! 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.

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- **2023 Bedouet Vigneron Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie "Le Domaine"** – 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. Wine Enthusiast awarded this vintage 92 points, noting its "fragrant nose of honey-drizzled baked apples and bread dough, followed by a rich palate of ripe fruit, white tea, and lemon zest".
Reg retail: $14 Smart price: $12

Pairing: Muscadet classically pairs with oysters, but this bold version can stand up to stronger flavors of grilled seafood or chicken.

- **2024 Chateau Moncontour Vouvray Sec** – Vouvray is a village in the mid-Loire, and in this area they make white wines from the Chenin Blanc grape. It is one of those regions, for me, where I enjoy every wine I've ever tried! This maker is large and well-known, but gosh they make tasty and reasonably-priced wine. This version is "sec" or dry – they do make a lovely, sweeter, "demi-sec" as well. You'll enjoy aromas of fresh green apple, lemon, and white blossoms, with a mouthwatering acidity and long finish.
Reg retail: $20 Smart price: $18

Pairing: Pairs beautifully with Asian foods and BBQ – something with a little sugar in the sauce. Classically served with goat cheese drizzled with honey.

- **2025 Domaine de Marcé Touraine Oisly Coulée Galante** – To compare, our third and final white grown in the Loire region is Sauvignon Blanc. This grape is traditionally grown in the Upper Loire (Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé) however this one comes from the border of the Touraine appellation near the village of Oisly. It is boldly aromatic with grapefruit, lime leaf, guava, and honeysuckle. Flavors of citrus and tropical fruit dominate, with a background of minerality. Really tasty and delicious, it's hard to put down the glass.
Reg retail: $20 Smart price: $18

Pairing: Sauv blanc notably tastes great with green herbs and with vinaigrettes, two things that can be difficult to pair. A great option when serving pesto or similar sauces.

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As far as red grapes go, Cabernet Franc is THE Loire Valley red; and it's grown right in the center of the Loire growing region, surrounding the beautiful town of Chinon, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Pairing ideas for Chinon wines: I think Cabernet Franc is the ideal summer-into-fall red. It's not as heavy as Cab Sauvignon or as overtly plush and jammy as some Merlots can be. Yet it holds up well to a late-summer grilled dinner and is versatile. Try it with anything from sausages to burgers to lamb kebabs and I think you'll be very happy! Also beautiful with classic French bistro fare like roasted chicken, lentil stew, or charcuterie. The region is also known for its goat cheese, and just like with the Vouvray above, fresh or aged goat cheese is commonly enjoyed with a red from Chinon.

- **2023 Vignobles du Paradis Chinon** – I encourage you to look up *vignoblesduparadis.com* if you have a moment. It is 23 hectares of vineyards and a winery that act as a supportive community to create a new vision of what winemaking can be. Ten people with disabilities are trained and employed by the winery through the support of the local Progecat Association. The wines they produce are award-winning and delicious. The Chinon is well-structured with nicely concentrated fruit flavors and hints of herbs.
Reg retail: $18 Smart price: $16

- **2023 Domaine Brunet Chinon** – Interestingly, while it's located in the Loire Valley region, this vineyard is actually located along the banks of a different smaller river, the Vienne. The winemaker Pascal Brunet is a small producer who has been making wine since 1979 (that's the year I was born!!!) The wine is an intense cherry-red color with a vibrant nose of raspberry, cherry, and red currant. The tannins are especially silky and well-rounded for a Cabernet Franc. Reg retail: $16 Smart price: $14

- **2023 Domaine Grosbois "La Cuisine de Ma Mere" Chinon** – Your final Chinon is named by the winemaker in honor of "[his] mother's cooking" and created to be a wine to drink with hearty French home-cooking. This vintage features notes of raspberry, red currant, and wild strawberry layered with hints of bell pepper, rose petal, and damp earth.
Reg retail: $24 Smart price: $22