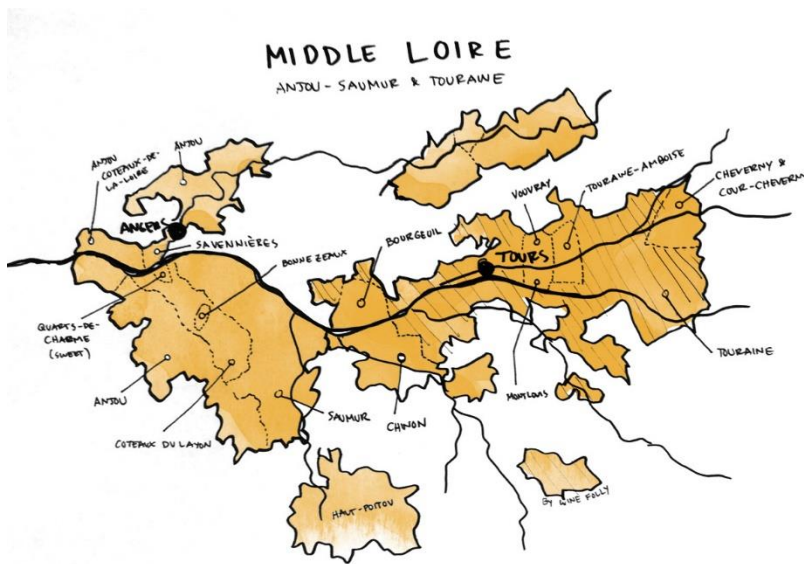


Loire Valley Wine Guide

February 22, 2016 - Updated December 2, 2020

<https://winefolly.com/deep-dive/loire-valley-wine-guide/>



Middle Loire Anjou, Saumur & Touraine

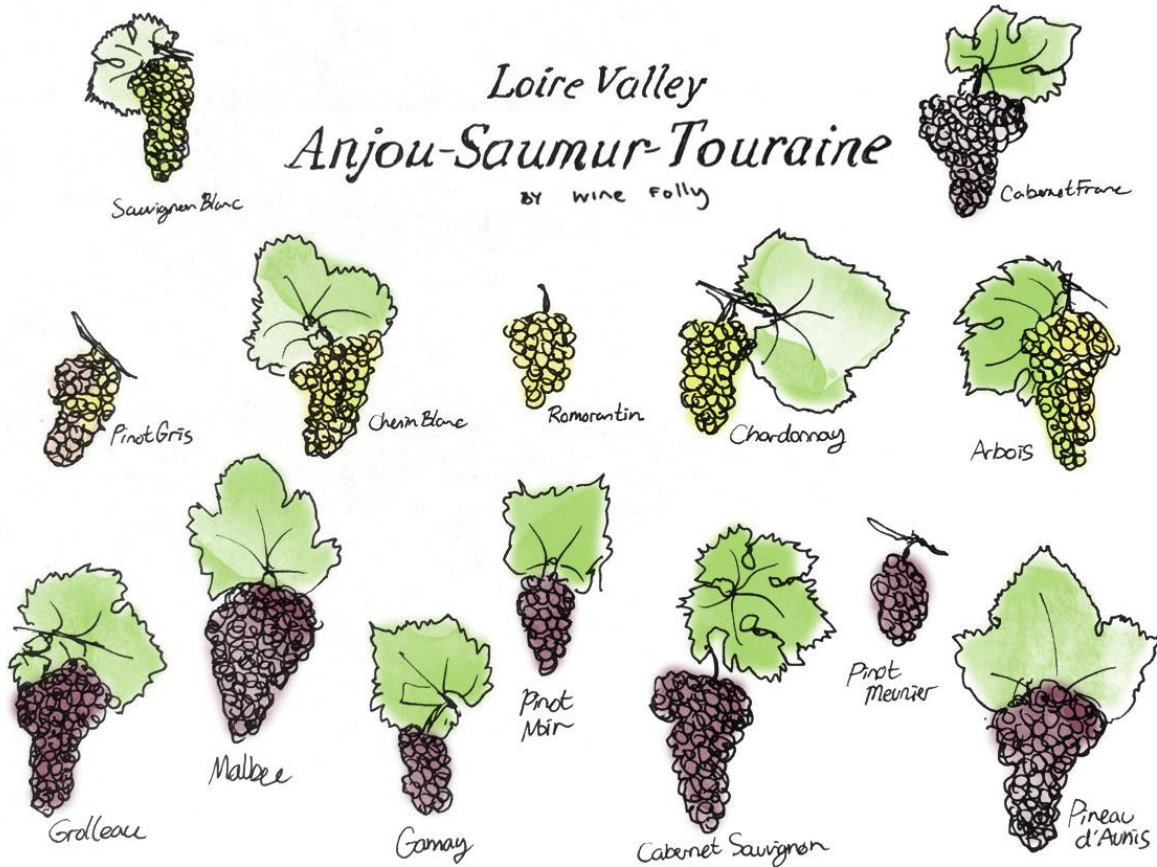
The vineyards surrounding the towns of Angers and Tours lie in some of the most elegantly breathtaking scenery in all of France. This is where Chenin Blanc reaches its zenith (as in, mind-bendingly great), where sparkling wines rule, and where Cabernet Franc takes center stage.

The Terrain: The maritime weather is tempered as you move inland. The seasons and climate here feel more defined and

hospitable. This particular part of the Loire is relatively flat is one of the warmest of the entire Loire Valley.

The Soils: There are a myriad of soils within the 5 sub-regions of the Middle Loire:

- **Anjou:** Western spots show dark schist soils referred to as “Anjou Noir” which result in more powerful, structured wines. It’s impossible to dig, so the cellars are above ground. The eastern part shows oyster-flecked limestone known as “tuffeau blanc.” This stuff crumbles easily so there are lots of cellars great for sparkling winemaking.
- **Saumur:** In the center of Anjou-Saumur lies Layon. It’s some of the best climate conditions in the world for [“noble rot”](#) (morning fog, Chenin Blanc, dry “foehn” winds) and thus Loire’s first Grand Cru sweet wine: Quarts de Chaume finds itself here.
- **Touraine:** Touraine is located upon the Paris Basin and thus full of limestone (aka “Turonian tuffeau”) topped with flinty clay (“perruches”) or sand and gravel. Each of these soil types impart levels of “puissance,” structure and age-ability. Tuffeau is the most noble, followed by [perruches](#) and finally gravel.
- **Orleans:** Limestone “tuffeau” with clay, sand, and gravel.
- **Loir Valley:** More limestone “tuffeau” with clay, sand, and gravel.



Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc dominate here.

Wine Varieties

- **Chenin Blanc:** Sometimes referred to as “Pineau de la Loire”
- **Cabernet Franc:** originating likely in the Basque region, it’s called “Breton” in the Loire
- **Others:** Romorantin, Arbois (rare indigenous white grape), Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay (mostly unoaked), Cabernet Sauvignon, Pineau d’Aunis (rare indigenous red grape), Malbec (aka “Côt”), Gamay, Grolleau Noir (a red), Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier.

Anjou Wine Appellations

If Anjou were known for just one wine style, it would be rosé. Rosé accounts for half of the region’s production. Here are the main appellations for rosé used in Anjou:

Anjou Rosé

- **Rosé de Loire AOP:** A dry rosé that typically uses Cabernet Franc and Grolleau with ripe red fruit aromas and a lean, zippy taste. This appellation can use grapes from all over the Loire.
- **Rosé d’Anjou AOP:** A just off-dry style (barely sweet) with intensely fruity notes of strawberry, rose petals, and subtle spiciness of black pepper.
- **Cabernet d’Anjou AOP:** A rosé! Using just Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon made in an off-dry style with candied fruit aromas of strawberry and red currant.

Anjou Red and White Wines

The Anjou region also produces some red and white wines:

- **Anjou Blanc AOP:** A secret value spot for both dry and off-dry Chenin Blanc!
- **Anjou Rouge AOP:** Simple, earthy red wines of Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet Franc.
- **Anjou Village AOP/Anjou Villages- Brissac AOP:** The best parcels inside Anjou of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon
- **Anjou Gamay AOP:** An appellation specifically for [Gamay](#) making fresh and juicy red wines.

Future Loire Grand Cru for Dry Chenin Blanc? Savennières

Savennières is a unique Chenin Blanc area that has been vying for Grand Cru status for some time now. Any. Day. The region is unique in that the vineyards have traditionally been passed from mother to daughter. There are three Savennières appellations:

- **Savennières AOP** Planted on five steep south facing hills. Some consider this to be best dry Chenin in the world. White lime flowers, anise, grapefruit and beeswax
- **Savennières Roche aux Moines AOP** Just 7 producers here on a steep schist slope which is hand-harvested.
- **Coulee de Serrant AOP** This historic (12th Century!) renowned monopoly (single producer region–Nicolas Joly) and France’s only 100% biodynamic AOP. Dry, age-worthy Chenin that is harvested later than most other appellations in the region.

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Anjou-Layon Sweet Wines

Sweet wines have historic repute in many of the Anjou appellations. All are crafted from Chenin Blanc and influenced by [Botrytis cinerea](#) or “noble rot” lending a rich, honeyed, and nutty nuance to these sweet nectars.

- **Anjou Côteaux de la Loire AOP:** similar soil to Savennières with lighter concentration of sweetness than other AOP’s on the Layon
- **Bonnezeaux AOP:** exceptional noble rot Chenin Blanc wines that are comparable to Quarts de Chaume
- **Coteaux du Layon AOP:** sometimes labeled with a village name as well
- **Coteaux de L’Aubance AOP** lighter and more airy style of sweet wines when compared to those of Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume
- **Quarts de Chaume AOP:** A “Grand Cru.” Wines must have a minimum of 85 g/l or 8.5% residual sugar (a little less than the sweetness of Coca Cola) but usually have much more than that!

Anjou Sparkling Wines

Whites of Chenin Blanc with aromas of nectarines and honeysuckle. Rosé bubbles include Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon with hints of fresh picked raspberries.

- **Anjou Mousseaux AOP:** aka “Anjou Fines Bulles” predominantly white traditional sparkling method that covers wines from the areas of Anjou Blanc, Anjou Rouge, Cabernet d’Anjou and Rose d’Anjou.
- **Crémant de Loire AOP:** This production area covers most of the Middle Loire. “Crémant” means producers use [the traditional method](#) and get considered more serious than that of Anjou Mousseaux.
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Saumur Wine Appellations

Saumur is sparkling wine country. Vineyards planted on limestone soils give the grapes the bright acidity they need to make outstanding sparkling wines. Under the vineyards lie miles and miles of tunnels and caves- “troglodytes,” carved from the limestone – the perfect place to age these delicious, bright bubbliies.

- **Coteaux de Saumur AOP:** 100% Chenin Blanc that’s hand-harvested for vibrant, wines. Mostly known as a sweet wine although both sweet and dry styles exist.
- **Saumur Blanc AOP:** Made into both still and sparkling styles. Vineyards are Turonian tuffeau (white chalky limestone).
- **Saumur Mousseux AOP:** The lightly sparkling appellation in the area.
- **Saumur Rosé AOP:** This region was formerly Cabernet de Saumur. Wines smell aromatic and taste mostly dry coming from sandy-clay soils..
- **Saumur Rouge AOP:** Originally, Cabernet Franc was meant to be used in Saumur Brut sparkling wines, but this appellation has proven to make dry reds as well.
- **Saumur-Champigny AOP** A region that’s mostly Cabernet Franc since the 1800s planted on sandy-chalky soils.
- **Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame AOP** The highest elevation of all Saumur appellations and considered a golden child of Saumur’s red wines.