



DOMAINE BENOIT GAUTIER

The Gautier Domaine in Vouvray has been in the family for seven generations. The origins are known to date back to the 17th Century, from a document noting the presence of vines around the Gautier house in 1669. Benoit Gautier, the present viticulteur, took charge in 1981. He began the policy of Domaine bottling, whereas previously all of their wines were sold to negociants. Today, the Domaine comprises 15 hectares of vines in the Vouvray AOC communes of Rochecorbon and Parçay-Meslay. The soil is the classic limestone-clay with silex for which the central Loire is famous. The average age of the vines is 25 years. Gautier usually harvests over a period of 21 days in late September and October. Bottling takes place from April to June following the harvest, and the bottles are aged in the domaine's permanently cool cellar cut deep into the hillside.

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| COUNTRY | France |
| REGION | Loire Valley |
| APPELLATION(S) | Vouvray |
| PRODUCER | Benoit Gautier |
| FOUNDED | 1669 |
| ANNUAL PRODUCTION | 10,000 |
| FARMING | Sustainable |
| WEBSITE | http://www.vouvraygautier.com |

Gautier's sparkling wine, **Vouvray Cuvee Antique Methode Traditionelle**, is made from 20-year-old vines across the estate's vineyards in Rochecorbon and Parçay-Meslay. Grass is planted between the vine rows to reduce yields and create a healthy natural ambiance. Gautier identifies and picks the Chenin Blanc vineyard parcels for his sparkling wines at the start of the harvest period, generally at 1.5 degrees lower in maturity than the fruit harvested 7-21 days later for the still wines. The grapes are gently pressed at low pressure and under a blanket of Co2 to prevent exposure to oxygen. The juice is then cleared of the solids. Fermentation takes place with the grape's natural yeasts in stainless steel tanks at a controlled low temperature of 16C. The young wine then matures in tank until bottling in January. All of the bottles are stored in Gautier's cellar with a constant temperature of 9C, where the secondary fermentation takes place. The bottles are riddled and eventually de-gorged in the cool cellar. To maintain a dry, fresh and finesse style, Gautier typically uses only 10 grams per litre of cane sugar for the dosage before re-corking. About 450 cases of **Cuvee Antique Methode Traditionelle** are produced annually.

The "**Vouvray De Gautier**" is winemaker Benoit Gautier's signature wine of the vintage. It is made from a selection of ripe Chenin Blanc grapes from many of his Domaine's vineyard parcels with flint-clay (argilo-siliceux) soil. Grass is planted between the vine rows to reduce yields and create a healthy natural ambiance. The grapes are pressed in a pneumatic press at low temperature and fermented with the natural yeasts present on the grape skins. The wine matures on its fine lees in temperature-controlled



stainless steel tanks over four months. There is no malolactic fermentation. In the Spring, Gautier chooses young wines with the sugar-acid balance that he seeks for Vouvray de Gautier. The fruity acidity of the Chenin Blanc is balanced with apricot and pear fruit with and honey notes and just enough residual sugar – the amount varies from year to year in proportion to acidity level – to attain a slightly off-dry finish. The Wine Spectator’s comments on the 2010 vintage well characterize the wine: “Juicy and pure, with a tasty mix of green and yellow apple fruit intertwined with fennel, anise and star fruit notes. Offers a bright, juicy finish” (90 score, Feb. 28, 2013). About 1000 cases of Vouvray de Gautier are made annually.

In 2004, Gautier launched a new and original *cuvée*, **ARGILEX**. It derives from white clay (argile) soil mixed with crumbled silex or quartz in specific hillside vineyard sites in the communes of Rochecorbon and Parçay-Meslay. The silex layers derive from coral bands in the ancient sea-bed dating back one million years. The silex particles embedded in clay often glisten in the sunlight. The grapes for the Argilex are harvested by hand at the precise moment when ripeness and natural acidity are in optimal balance, so that the wine is as fresh, vivid and expressive as possible. The wine is vinified fully dry at cold temperature using only native yeasts, and it is fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks to highlight the bright, racy fruit. The fine lees are kept in suspension until bottling in April, as they impart complexity and nuance to the wine. Gautier’s Vouvray Argilex is a stylish, fully dry Vouvray, with pear, apricot and citrus notes carried by a long, mineral finish. About 600 cases are produced annually.

The **Clos la Lanterne** is a particularly historic site. It is a hillside vineyard with limestone-clay soil, which spreads out beneath the “Lantern of Rochecorbon,” an old watch tower, with a commanding view of the Loire Valley. The exceptional exposure and microclimate gives wines of compelling flavor and intensity. Speaking of this vineyard, Roger Voss, in his book *The Wines of The Loire*, comments “here was a mature Demi-Sec Vouvray from the classic 1985 vintage that revealed how the wines can develop after their closed-up period: a wine of great ripeness and richness, with a deliciously-perfumed, slightly dusty character and hints of minerals, superbly balanced, and promising years ahead of it.”

