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24 Mar 2016

Two great vintages in the Loire



You'd expect someone who champions the downtrodden producers of the Loire and who makes his living from selling their wines to be upbeat about two excellent vintages in a row, 2014 and 2015. If that person happens to be the irrepressible Charles Sydney, the author of many of the Loire vintage reports that appear on this site, then you expect him to be bouncing up and down. He was.

Charles and his partner (and wife) Philippa were justifiably enthusiastic at their London 'benchmark' tasting earlier this year, which featured wines from these two very good vintages. I echo Richard's broad-brush endorsement of the impressive 2014s - almost all the reds below are also from that vintage - and can only agree with Charles that 2015 is another reason to lap up the best wines of the Loire. (The photo shows one of Bernard Fouquet's parcels of Chenin Blanc in Vouvray at the end of September 2015.)

Just after this tasting I visited New Zealand, where I tasted a broad range of Sauvignons, some of which had, in my opinion, too much residual sugar, particularly but not exclusively at the cheaper end of the scale. The Loire Sauvignons below were mercifully free of such artifice, these producers seemingly able to make dry, well-balanced wines at all price levels.

However, the winemakers in the Loire are also masters of balance when it comes to the Chenin styles that range from dry to off-dry and up to moelleux, and if you add in the exemplary white-wine appellations closer to the Atlantic, the understated but pure, textured and site-driven wines of Muscadet, you would be hard-pressed to find the same quality/price ratio and range in many other wine regions of the world. Fortunately, Loire reds also enjoyed the excellent conditions for ripeness and freshness in both 2014 and 2015, making the Loire a happy hunting ground for anyone who appreciated Jancis's recent advice on how to [Save your pennies](#) but also providing top-notch wines that will repay some time in bottle, especially the more concentrated Chenins and the more serious Cabernet Francs, if you can keep your hands off them in the meantime.

To get a better understanding of the conditions that created these lovely wines, see Charles Sydney's Loire 2015 vintage report [The sticky fingers vintage](#), and see [The Five Smiley vintage](#) for the background to the 2014s.

The 72 wines listed below are grouped by appellation and/or grape variety (and by appellation within those groups). Present at the tasting were several of the growers - and it strikes me as significant that Charles always refers to them as growers not as producers and always emphasises their huge efforts in the vineyard - which is why there more wines listed for them.

FIZZ

- [Dom de la Taille aux Loups, Triple Zéro Pétillant NV Montlouis-sur-Loire](#) *Zero chaptalisation, zero liqueur de tirage and zero dosage so the fruit has to be ripe. Fermented in older barriques - slow and cool.*

Gorgeously honeyed aroma of ripe pear and zesty citrus with some of Chenin's classic quince notes. Extremely dry but packed with Chenin fruit flavour. Broad and crisp with a hint of baked apple. Long and delicious. (JH)12.5% Drink 2016-2019

17.5

MUSCADET

The first wine isn't strictly a Muscadet but it is made by a Muscadet family - Famille Lieubeau, owners of Domaine de la Fruitière as well as vineyards in the new Clisson and Château-Thébaud crus - and the carefully devised blend does include Melon de Bourgogne.

- [Dom de la Fruitière, Vignes Blanches 2015 IGP Val de Loire](#) *40% Melon de Bourgogne, 30% Chardonnay, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Folle Blanche. 20-year-old vines, sandy loam on granite. Terra Vitis. 4 hours' skin contact for 50% of the blend. Basket press protected from O2. Fermented at 14-16 °C, 3 months on lees.*

Clever blend in which none of the varieties dominates the aroma though here there is a touch of melon and a hint of fresh herbs and bright citrus, verging on the ripeness of pineapple but subtle still. Rich and round in the mouth (is there some RS?), generous in zesty citrus on the palate but still with an echo of dry, chalky texture to give it a sense of place. For a delicate

wine, it has impressive persistence but doesn't have the same mineral core as Fruitière Muscadet. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2017

16

- **Famille Lieubeau, Joseph Grégoire 2015 Muscadet**Very lively with a note of pear drops - as he says, 'a fermentative style'. Crisp and a little chalky. Not a huge amount specific fruit flavour but not bad depth and length. Smooth texture even with all that freshness. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2017

15.5

- **Jérôme Choblet, Le Fief Guérin Vieilles Vignes Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Côtes de Grandlieu***Vines aged 65-70 years. Vineyards show the three sides of Muscadet, says Choblet: fruit, flower and mineral.*

Very fresh, crisp and still a light pear-drop note (seems like a fermentation aroma). Tight, lively and zesty. Lightweight - not especially intense on the mid palate - but well sustained.

(JH)12% Drink 2016-2017

16

- **Jérôme Choblet, Château de la Pierre Vieilles Vignes Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Côtes de Grandlieu***80-year-old vines on granite and amphibolite soils, giving more mineral wines, says Choblet.*

Fine, stony citrus, much more citrus than the Fief Guérin just tasted. Crushed stones, grapefruit, very crisp. Long, with a slight grip on the finish. Salty, classic Muscadet. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018

16.5

- **Dom des Herbauges, Classic Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Côtes de Grandlieu**Aromas of grapefruit, pear and apple - a very fruity and ripe style for Muscadet but still has the region's attractive dusty note. Gentle grainy texture gives it shape and adds freshness. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018

16

- **Dom des Herbauges, La Roche Blanche Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Côtes de Grandlieu***Low yields from schist and galets roulés soils.*

More fruity than the Ch de la Pierre, with pear and stone fruit on the nose but really dry on the palate. Elegant and beautifully balanced. Tight, dry and stony but still scented on the mid palate. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2019

17

- **Bonnet-Huteau, Les Laures Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine**Tank sample. Smoky and seriously mineral nose. Relatively full bodied with a dry, grainy texture and weight from the lees and - I imagine - the site undergirding the lovely sour-citrus purity. Great length. (JH)Drink 2016-2019

17

- **Dom de la Fruitière, Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine***30-year-old vineyards on sandy loam over granite. Terra Vitis. 4 hours' skin maceration. Fermented at 16 °C, 6 months on lees. Tank sample.*

Delicate stone fruits and quince with a creamy lees overlay, and a mineral, nicely dusty aroma. Stony, bone dry and very direct. Has length rather than breadth, moderate intensity with the persistence increased by the crisp acidity and the texture of lees ageing, like the grain of fresh pears. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2019

16.5

- **Dom de la Fruitière, Gneiss de Bel Abord Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine***Tank sample. 45-year-old vines, east facing, on the slopes down to the Maine river. Sandy loam over gneiss. Terra Vitis. Basket press, fermented at 18 °C, 9 months on lees with stirring.*

Very different aroma from the Fruitière straight Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine. Still delicate but more floral, with pears and fresh apple and still that mineral/stony quality. On the palate, it is

more steely and more intense. That delicious grainy texture again and a bone-dry finish even though the fruit tastes a little riper. Salty aftertaste. I don't know the retail price but looking at the ex-cellar price, I think this is likely to be **GV**. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2019

16.5

- **Gadais, Dom de la Tourmaline Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** Pear and green-apple zest on the nose. And green apple on the palate too. Classic, chalky, dry and correct. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018
16
- **Jérémy Huchet, Dom de la Chauvinière 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** Stony and pear fruited but with terrific intensity on the palate, the fine, pear-like texture gives this really impressive length. There's some stone-fruit richness but overall it is the textural finesse and complexity that carries this to a long finish. Bone-dry and with a sour stony aftertaste that adds to the mouth-watering effect. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2019
17
- **Jérémy Huchet, Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** More stony citrus than the Domaine de la Chauvinière, chalky, sweet/sour intensity and so full of flavour yet without intense *fruit* flavours - saline and crisp and beautifully textured. Very crisp finish - which is masked by the fact that the wine is not chilled. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018
17
- **Famille Lieubeau, Ch de la Placelière Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** More smoky than the Joseph Grégoire Muscadet. More apple and green fruits. Tight and stony on the palate but has lovely length and tension. Cool, and strongly mineral. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018
16.5
- **Sauvion, Ch du Cléray Sur Lie 2015 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine** Tank sample hence slightly cloudy and still smells a little of the fermentation (pear drops). A bit sweet and sour at the moment but plenty of depth to the fruit to complement the dry stony texture. (JH) Drink 2016-2018
16.5
- **Famille Lieubeau, Ch de l'Aulnay 2012 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine**
Château-Thébaud Unnecessarily heavy bottle. One of the new crus. 70-year-old vines, east facing on a sloping site down to the Maine river. Loam and sand over mica schist and gneiss. In the process of converting to organics. Ploughing, deleafing and green harvests. Yield just 30-35 hl/ha. Manual harvest. Whole-bunch pressed. Three-week fermentation at 20 °C with ambient yeasts, no SO2 before ferment. 36 months on lees.
Darker colour than a typical Muscadet, even one with a few years in bottle - very pale gold. Terrific aroma of quince and just-ripe apricot. Starting to show a hint of honey but there is still the fragrance of blossom - reminds me a little of a serious Austrian Grüner Veltliner with some bottle age. On the palate, there's intensity of sour-fresh fruit and excellent freshness balanced by finely chiselled fruit and the firmer texture from the lees ageing as well as a strongly mineral depth. Bone dry but has scents of wild-flower honey on the nose and palate. Really complex even though it is direct and tight. Very good wine - impressively persistent. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2022
17.5
- **Famille Lieubeau, Ch de l'Aulnay 2009 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine**
Château-Thébaud Unnecessarily heavy bottle. Still has the fresh quince of the 2012 but has also developed a more spicy aroma, spicy mineral - and yet somehow creamy at the same time. On the palate, beautifully fresh and textured but a lovely balance between dry and stony and rounded and rich with bottle age, adding a cedary quality. Long and deep and still finely focused - and still very youthful with more complexity to come. (JH)12% Drink 2014-2020
17.5

- *Famille Lieubeau 2012 Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine Clisson* *Unnecessarily heavy bottle. 40-year-old vines on the Maine river slopes, south facing. Sandy loam over granite. Weathered bedrock gives a good water supply and allows deep rooting. In conversion to organic farming: ploughing, cover crops, green harvest resulting in 35 hl/ha. Hand harvest. Whole-bunch pressing, 3 weeks' fermentation at 20 °C with ambient yeasts. No SO2 before ferment, 24 months on lees.*
Smells richer and riper than the Château-Thébaud. Honeyed, crystallised citrus and still that quince zest. Creamy too with a hint of apricot and clementine. Deep and rich and generous but still with wonderful freshness. Bone-dry but more rounded than the Château-Thébaud, more caressing. Hard to believe this has not seen any (old) oak with the lovely creamy texture. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2020
17

VOUVRAY, MONTLOUIS and OTHER CHENIN BLANC

- *Cady, Sec 2015 Anjou* Slightly cloudy tank sample. Fermentation-related pear aroma here. Although it is a tank sample you can see the promise – bags of fruit and a lovely grainy texture to bring complexity. Fresh and long. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018
16.5
- *Cady, Cheninsolite 2014 Anjou* Dusty, chalky apple fruit. Big, rich and broad on the palate but with the crisp acidity of the variety to keep it in shape. Tastes rather sweet – even without any residual sugar, which undermines the precision for me. Even though it is dry, it tastes off dry. (JH)14% Drink 2016-2020
16
- *Ch de Fesles, La Chapelle 2014 Anjou* Creamy, mealy pear aroma. Chewy, fresh and very moreish. Plenty of pear and quince fruit but this is more about the texture and freshness in harmony. Long and food-friendly. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2019
16.5
- *Dom de la Noblaie 2015 Chinon* Tank sample. There are only 65 ha of vines in the Chinon Blanc appellation and Jérôme Billard had 4 of them. Vines planted 1940-53 on calcareous soil. Picked in three passes.
Creamy pear aroma and an attractive grainy texture. Fresh, dry and full of pea fruit - but it's the fruit itself not the pear notes that you sometimes get from fermentation. Firm but crisp. Already long and deep. (JH) Drink 2015-2020
17
- *Jérémie Mourat, Schiste Blanc 2015 IGP Val de Loire* Tank sample. A baby but has terrific stony freshness. Intense and intensely fresh and a fine dry texture. Very good and persistent. (JH) Drink 2016-2019
16.5
- *Dom de la Taille aux Loups, Rémus Plus Sec 2014 Montlouis-sur-Loire* 80- to 100-year-old vines - a selection from all their vineyard - parcels too small to be fermented separately. 15 months in oak.
Tangy quince aroma and fine zesty intensity. Refined essence of Chenin and Montlouis. Intense and elegant. Cool, fresh and immensely long. (JH)
13% Drink 2016-2026
17.5
- *Dom de la Taille aux Loups, Rémus Sec 2014 Montlouis-sur-Loire* Fruit from three separate calcareous sites with some clay. Vines aged 50-80 years. Yield just 20 hl/ha. Slow barrel fermentation without yeast addition. No malo. One year in barrique (25% new).

Intensely fresh aroma of quince. Deep and creamy on the palate with a grainy freshness. Broad but so fresh. Lovely expression of Chenin. I am pretty sure it will age longer than this. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2020

16.9

- Dom de la Taille aux Loups, Clos Mosny Sec 2014 Montlouis-sur-Loire *A 12-ha monopole and a 2-ha parcel in the heart of the vineyard goes into this wine.*
Cool, creamy and restrained. Tighter, and tastes drier than the Clos de la Bretonnière. Silky and intense but elegant too with ripe pear and apple hints. Deep and subtle rather than broad or fat. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2024
17
- Ch de Targé, Les Fresnettes 2014 Saumur Barrel fermented. Definite oak spice on the nose. Tight, oaky and very crisp. Sweet/sour clash. Maybe with time it will get more interesting and integrated but it is rather harsh at the moment. (JH)14% Drink 2016-2019
15.5
- Dom des Forges, Moulin du Gué 2014 Savennières Barrel fermented. Smells more woody than oaky, more cedary. That same cedary-sour freshness on the palate, making this a great food wine but not as easy to approach on its own. The oak shows more than on some, perhaps just a little bit brash. (JH)13.5% Drink 2017-2022
16
- Dom des Aubuisières, Cuvée Silex Sec 2015 Vouvray Deep apple aroma. Off dry and balanced by very fine acidity. Classic Loire sweet/sour balance. Mouthwatering finish. Intense and long. (JH)12% Drink 2017-2024
16.5
- Dom des Aubuisières, Le Marigny Sec 2015 Vouvray Tastes much drier than the Cuvée Silex. Tight and sour and long with drive and length. Finely balanced and very very long. (JH)12% Drink 2018-2028
17+
- Paul Buisse, La Grille Classic Sec 2015 Vouvray More creamy/mealy than the Ch Gaudrelle. Sweetish but tangy quince freshness. A sort of Kabinett style. Full of flavour, just a little sweet/sour at the moment and I am not sure if this will change, hence the minus. (JH) Drink 2017-2020
16-
- Ch Gaudrelle, Le Gué d'Amants Sec 2014 Vouvray Classic Chenin wet-wool nose with a nice chalky note. Creamy texture, crisp-apple freshness. Bone dry, chalky texture, good food wine. (JH) Drink 2016-2020
16
- Dom de la Taille aux Loups, Clos de la Bretonnière Sec 2014 Vouvray *This site has more clay on the surface.*
It is much less open on the nose than the Rémus - less ripe but still aromatic with aroma of fresh pear. Deep and textured, power and refinement with excellent freshness. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2024
17

CHENIN MOELLEUX

- Ch Pierre-Bise, Les Rouannières 2014 Coteaux du Layon Beaulieu Wet wool, lanolin and a hint of apricots. Sweet with notes of barley sugar but the sweetness balanced by just enough acidity. (JH)11.5% Drink 2017-2024
16

- Dom des Forges, Premier Cru 2014 Coteaux du Layon Chaume More marked by the lanolin, wet-wool aroma, and sweeter and more intense than their Coteaux du Layon St Aubin, with flavours of orange and apricot adding to the richness. Sweet and fresh at the same time. (JH)11.5% Drink 2018-2024
17
- Dom des Forges, Moelleux 2015 Coteaux du Layon St-Aubin-de-Luigné Wet wool, lanolin and baked apple. Sweet, pure baked apple on the palate, with perfect sour freshness to undercut that sweetness. Moderate intensity, very good harmony. (JH)12% Drink 2017-2022
16.5
- Ch Pierre-Bise, Grand Cru 2014 Quarts de Chaume Inviting aroma of baked apple. Viscous, intense and gorgeously seductive while still finely balanced. Orange and apricot marzipan notes on the finish and so much more to come. Don't rush this one. (JH)11% Drink 2020-2034
17.5

SANCERRE, POUILLY-FUMÉ and OTHER SAUVIGNON BLANC

- Cave de Mont-près-Cambord 2015 Cheverny Tank sample. Light, fresh, lemony fruit. Intensely pure fruit, not especially complex but lots of fruit without being in your face. (JH) Drink 2016-2017
16
- La Tour Beaumont Sauvignon Blanc 2015 Haut-Poitou can't quite make out the aroma here: mostly nettles but also orange pith. Crisp and persuasive – long and persistent. (JH)12.5% Drink 2016-2017
16
- Jérémie Mourat, OVNI Sauvignon Blanc 2015 IGP Val de Loire OVNI = Objet Viticole Non Identifié. Delicate, fragrant, green fruits, almost a little floral. Then intense and green-fruited on the palate, both dry and creamy in texture. Creamy but crisp finish. (JH)12.5% Drink 2016-2018
16.5
- Réthoré Davy, Le Chapitre Pinot Gris 2015 IGP Val de Loire Spicy grapefruit aroma, lifted and inviting. Taut and crisp but still with recognisable Pinot Gris spice and breadth. Long and with a firm leesy texture. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2019
16.5
- Réthoré Davy, Les Parcelles 2015 IGP Val de Loire Herby nettle aroma with a saline quality, and a spice that reminds me of curry leaf. Full and creamy on the palate, giving a very good harmony with the extremely crisp acidity and tangy herbal/grapefruit flavour. Impressive length and concentration without aggressive pungency. (JH)12% Drink 2016-2018
16.5
- Minchin, La Tour St-Martin 2015 Menetou-Salon Morogues Tank sample and slightly cloudy. Spicy citrus, even clementine here. Excellent intensity and streamlined length. Juicy and serious at the same time. (JH)12.5% Drink 2016-2019
17
- Dom de Bel Air, Cuvée des Papillons 2015 Pouilly-Fumé Pure, classic Pouilly-Fumé: grapefruit pith and a stony intensity, then impressive intensity on the palate. Concentrated and mouth-watering but full of bright citrus. Tight and fine. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2018
17
- Alain Cailbourdin, Cuvée de Boisfleury 2015 Pouilly-Fumé Salty citrus – grapefruit and herbal notes – aromatic intensity and then impressive density on the palate, though still finely fresh. Subtle but concentrated. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2018

17

- Alain Cailbourdin, Triptyque 2014 Pouilly-Fumé Barrel fermented. Very ripe fruit – more green fig than anything else. Rich, sweet-tasting and full of flavour. Is there some residual sugar here? Apparently not. Rich, creamy, generous but finishes fresh. Big and rounded. Not subtle but full of flavour and long. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2020

17

- André Pigeat 2015 Quincy Tank sample. A whiff of the fermentation tank (pear) but also an attractive grapefruit/stony aspect. Taut but not lean. Zesty and long with a mouth-watering finish. Really persistent. (JH) Drink 2016-2019

17

- Nathalie Lafond, Cuvée Nathalie 2015 Reuilly Smoky grapefruit with a hint of lapsang souchong. Tight and sour on the palate. A little bit hard/harsh. (JH) Drink 2016-2017

15.5

- Alain Mabillot, La Ferté 2015 Reuilly Cask sample and thus slightly cloudy. Restraint and finesse are the first impressions. Tight, tangy lemon. The sort of subtlety in a Sauvignon that seems to be found only in the Loire, but there's also impressive stony persistence. (JH) Drink 2016-2018

16.5

- Laporte, Rochoy 2015 Sancerre Tank sample. Slightly cloudy. Spicy pear aroma and creamy spice on the palate. Defined and precise but rather linear, for the moment at least, but give it a few months in bottle for it to settle down. Long, sour-fresh finish. (JH) Drink 2016-2018

16.5

- Thierry Merlin-Cherrier 2015 Sancerre Tank sample. Still showing some pear-like fermentation notes but the slight grip and freshness make this very moreish. Long citrusy aftertaste. (JH) Drink 2016-2018

16.5

- Vincent Pinard, Cuvée Flores 2015 Sancerre Tight and stony on the palate but there's very nice fruit *intensity* even without massive fruit *flavour*. Very persistent and refined. (JH) Drink 2017-2021

17.5

- Vincent Pinard, Cuvée Nuance 2014 Sancerre Barrel fermented. The oak gives more creaminess than oak flavour. Mealy/leesy breadth with assertive Sauvignon Blanc freshness and herbal intensity. The oak is subtle but the overall effect is concentrated, fresh and already complex. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2020

17

- Vincent Pinard, Cuvée Petit Chemarin 2014 Sancerre Smells very dusty/chalky. And very green on the palate – not unripe but green fruit and green fig. A little too tart for me but I guess it will age well. At the moment there is a clash of ripe green fruit and very high acid. I hope it will come round because it is pretty demanding now. It certainly has concentration but needs a little more time to marry. (JH)13% Drink 2018-2024

16.5+

- Jean-Max Roger, La Côte de Bué 2014 Sancerre Stony, herbal and creamy on the nose. Deeply creamy on the palate too, generous in texture but fresh and almost sour in its intense freshness. Long and complex already. (JH)12.5% Drink 2016-2022

18

- Cellier de Beaujardin, Moulin des Aigremonts Sauvignon Blanc 2015 Touraine Inviting herbal aroma with a creamy texture and orange-pith flavour on the palate. Dry, moreish and subtle. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2017

16

- Beauséjour, Les Grenettes 2015 Touraine There's a touch of pear-like fermentation aroma here

for now, with more citrus on the palate. Straightforward but with a full flavour and crisp acidity making a satisfying whole. (JH)Drink 2016-2017

16

- **Bellevue Sauvignon Blanc 2015 Touraine** There's a note of orange here, as if there were a touch of benevolent botrytis. Complex aromas of citrus and a smoky quality. On the palate, even more deliciously complex. Spice, sour apricot, and citrus freshness. Very good. Depth, length and distinctively dry and textured. So much more to it than a typical off-dry NZ Sauvignon Blanc. (JH)13% Drink 2016-2019

17

- **Dom de la Bergerie - Jacky Marteau Sauvignon Blanc 2015 Touraine** Nettly herbal citrus and a hint of spice. Terrific intensity balanced by zesty freshness. Creamy and spiced on the finish. The sour intensity that works so well with Touraine Sauvignon when complemented by rounded texture. (JH)13.5% Drink 2016-2018

16.5

- **Paul Buisse, Les Parcelles Sauvignon 2015 Touraine** Tank sample. A little bit catty on the nose, or boxtree if you are being more generous. Tangy and spicy on the palate, with more grapefruit and orange pith. Persistent, and I think it will be more interesting and complex in another 6 months. (JH)Drink 2016-2017

16+

BOURGUEIL, CHINON and SAUMUR-CHAMPIGNY

- **Dom de la Butte, Le Haut de la Butte 2014 Bourgueil** *Destemmed and sorted in the vineyard. Yields less than 30 hl/ha. No pigeage.*

Intense, really dark fruit and a dusty graphite aroma. Dusty texture and a savoury quality - easy but deep and long. Firm, ripe and delicious. (JH)12.5% Drink 2015-2019

16.5

- **Dom de la Butte, Mi-Pente 2014 Bourgueil** *Destemmed. Fermented in 50-hl oak vats, then aged in barriques, 30% new, for just over a year.*

Deep, glowing crimson. Savoury, dark and spicy. Ripe cherries, fabulous fruit quality but not simple. Deep and long and just a little chewy but rounded. (JH)13% Drink 2015-2025

17.5

- **Couly-Dutheil, Clos de l'Olive 2014 Chinon** Deep crimson. Herbaceous, lifted dark-red fruit. Classic Cabernet Franc, with aromatic fruit, fine texture, great freshness. Dry and grainy on the finish. A baby with potential. (JH)13.5% Drink 2017-2025

16.5+

- **Charles Joguet, Les Charmes 2014 Chinon** Very dark crimson. A little meaty and rich in dark fruit. Peppery graphite minerality to the fore, so dry and textured but all in place for a long future. Not yet charming but very fine. (JH)13% Drink 2019-2028

17+

- **Dom de la Noblaie, Le Temps des Cerises 2014 Chinon** Organic farming. Intense crimson. Peppery, crunchy dark-red fruit, just a little smoky. A fine texture - silky but dry. Gentle and fresh, subtle. (JH)Drink 2015-2018

16

- **Dom de la Noblaie, Les Chiens-Chien 2014 Chinon** *Named after a single vineyard on dense clay, organic farming. Aged in 400-litre oak.*

Very deep crimson. Peppery, attractively dusty, dry finesse with deliciously smooth texture. (JH)Drink 2016-2020

16.5

- Dom de la Noblaie, Les Blancs Manteaux Vieilles Vignes 2014 Chinon *The name is apparently a reference to the Knights Templar. Old vines, organically farmed on calcareous soil.*
Very deep crimson. More savoury on the nose than the Chiens Chiens, darker in character. Even greater finesse - tight and very fine-boned. This is all about texture though you are more aware of the tannins. Impressively refined and delicious. (JH) Drink 2015-2020
17
- Dom de la Noblaie, Pierre de Tuf 2014 Chinon *Vines planted 1944 on flinty clay. The name refers to the tuffeau (limestone) rocks of the region out of which the ancient (15th-century) fermentation tank was carved. 12 months in 500-litre oak.*
Richer dark fruit than the Blancs Manteaux just tasted, more aromatic, lifted and peppery. Savoury but with great freshness. Firmer tannins too. Lots of energy and very long. (JH) Drink 2016-2024
17
- Dom de la Noblaie, Pierre de Tuf 2012 Chinon *Despite its extra 2 years in bottle, this still has a wonderfully fresh aroma of dark fruit. Perhaps less depth than the 2014 but greater elegance, fine-boned. Long, dry and refined.* (JH) Drink 2015-2020
16.5
- Ch du Hureau, Tuffe 2014 Saumur-Champigny *Deep cherry red. Ripe, spicy cherry fruit. Then that gorgeous dry texture with a graphite freshness and very long finish. Delicious on its own but would also be great with food.* (JH) 13% Drink 2016-2020
16.5
- Ch du Hureau, Lisagathe 2014 Saumur-Champigny *Deep cherry red. Crunchy dark fruit, ripe but strongly mineral thanks partly to the texture. Dry, paper-fine but present tannins. Finest of tannin textures, dry but not drying. Graphite all the way.* (JH) 13.5% Drink 2018-2026
17
- Ch de Targé 2014 Saumur-Champigny *Mid crimson. Peppery dark-red fruit. Lively, dry vin de soif. Straightforward but refreshing, the tannins tight but not in the least tough thanks to all that lovely fruit.* (JH) 13% Drink 2016-2018
16