



WINE CLUB CHRONICLE

October 2017

issue no.90

crushak.com

CHÂTEAU DE VILLENEUVE

Talk about history! Wine production at Château de Villeneuve dates back to the late 1500s when the land was owned by the Family Villeneuve. The land was intended for the eldest Villeneuve son, but he was killed fighting in the American Revolution under Lafayette at the battle of Yorktown, so it was passed on to the younger son.

In 1867 extensive renovations were made to the Château only to have it taken over during WWII and subsequently bombed by Ally forces.

In 1969 it came into the possession of the current owners, the Chevallier Family, who fully restored it to its former glory and run it to this day, supplying this month's wine club with some awesome wines!

Château de Villeneuve



Philippe Alliet

Chinon Vieilles Vignes (2015)

grape: Cabernet Franc

NOW THIS IS SOME WINE! Smoke, pipe tobacco, wisps of cardamom and black pepper...and some solid tannins that somehow never really got in the way of the luscious texture. If this reminds you of good Bordeaux that makes sense, as many a good blend from there owe their complexity in part to Cab Franc's beguiling nature. But comparisons are almost a shame when you can just enjoy this on its own. As for when to drink, a curious note: we tried this wine over the course of three days, and in all that time, it was never anything but delicious Which is to say, it's likely got a long life, but there's no need to wait. **Drink now-2030**



Saumur, France

CELLAR WINE CLUB

Villeneuve Saumur Blanc (2016)

grape: Chenin Blanc

"I got chills, they're multiplying!" -John Travolta, *Grease*
Yowza! Now this is just one scintillating aromatic pirouette after another: lemon custard, quince, plantain, and the prettiest chamomile flowers ever. The power and intensity on such a nimble frame is matched by few things we've encountered...elite ninjas come to mind, as do flying squirrels, but that's about it. This wine really showcases a wonderful aspect of good Chenin Blanc: having these ethereal aromatics and racy acidity but a fairly full frame on the palate, meaning we think this will hold its own against well more than just apps! We're thinking buttery roast chicken, or even pork chops with braised apples.



Villeneuve Saumur-Champigny Rouge (2015)

grape: Cabernet Franc

If ever there was a wine perfect for Thanksgiving dinner, this is it. At first glance light and unassuming, yet after a few minutes it begins to reveal its multifaceted character, like a prism showing new colors with every swirl of the glass. The bright cranberry notes on the nose are what really stand out here, but one of the great joys of cabernet franc is often how it plays off of a good meal, so don't hold back here: butternut squash and hazelnuts with cured lemon, pan-seared trout and shallots...there's a lot of ways to go here. **Drink now-2019**



CLUB RED

Marc Bredif Chinon (2015)

grape: Cabernet Franc

If you have the occasion, opening this bottle side by side with the Villeneuve Saumur-Champigny is a fascinating study in cab franc. Though these wines come from sites maybe thirty miles apart at most, they have very different characters: the ripeness showcased here is likely due to Chinon's slightly warmer microclimate, well-draining limestone soils, and good hillside exposure all pitching in together to beef up the concentration of flavors a bit. Chinon is better known in the US and Great Britain than Saumur, prized for its richness; interestingly, many in France tend towards Saumur for its lightness and nuance. Lucky us, because we don't have to choose :) **Drink now-2019**





Chateau de Saumur and some of the Troglodyte dwellings made from its limestone quarries.



TUFFEAU & TROGLODYTES

The geology that lies beneath the Saumur region of France has a long history and reputation for being part of the most influential terroir in the entire wine world. Saumur is on the Western Edge of a limestone marl that extends from Saumur through Sancerre & Pouilly Fume, over to Chablis and the other Grand Cru of Burgundy and up into the Aube & Champagne. It is precisely this chalky, Kimmeridgian soil that is responsible for some of the most important wines in the world. Thanks to layers of compressed marine fossils in this limestone, the soils are both nutrient rich and provide a great balance of water retention and drainage for the vines. In addition to adding an underlying minerality to the wines, the alkaline nature of the chalky soils seem to provide some balance to grapes that have high natural acidity, like Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon & Chenin Blanc, and Cabernet Franc.

In the Loire river valley, this limestone is called “tuffeau”. Because it was easy to excavate yet still strong, Tuffeau was used to build the many great Chateau that line the river. As a consequence, the whole region is a warren of cliffside caves, tunnels, and trenches from centuries of limestone quarrying. And while the nobility lived in the Chateau above, these caves logically became the homes for the general populace. These troglodyte caves, were over the centuries converted into dwellings and eventually whole villages by local farmers, monks, artisans, & soldiers. The highest concentration of these troglodyte villages is in Saumur. While some of these troglodyte villages have become tourist attractions, museums, hotels, or vacation homes, many have been turned into wine cellars. Often the vines are grown on the plateau above and the cellar is found in the cliff face below.

