

Sébastien Brunet

Vouvray 'La Rocherie' Brut NV



Appellation: Vouvray

Cuvée: La Rocherie

Color: White.

Grapes: Chenin Blanc

Vines

Soils: clay-limestone soils

Exposition: south-facing

Altitude: 100m

Training: on wire, cordon de royat

Climate: continental with cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers

Winemaking

Traditional method. After a slow press, 80% of the wine undergoes the first fermentation in tank, 20% in neutral 225-litre barrels, all with ambient yeasts. After a second fermentation in bottle the wine is aged for 18 months on its lees. Dosage 6 g/l.

"Mid gold. Zesty Cox's apple juice on the nose. Pretty marked frothiness but lovely pure Chenin Blanc flavours with marked acidity, as well as just a teeny bit of honey. There's a little suggestion of chewiness on the admirably long, very clean finish This would make a great-value change from a champagne – but you do have to know and love Chenin."

– Jancis Robinson

Tasting Notes : The wine pours into an all-purpose stem with great vigor and unleashes a frothy mousse that takes about 10 seconds to settle down. Following a few gentle swirls, delicate ripe aromas began wafting out in the form of apricot, peach, green apple skin, yellow apple slices, citrus peel, crushed rock, flint, and orange peel with a slight almond skin nuttiness. The medium-bodied palate is supple and generously fruited but a strong mineral presence dominates on the mid-palate before crescendoing with a crash of mouthwatering acidity. The ultimate brunch wine, sparkling Vouvray is well suited to all kinds of cheese, especially goat cheeses, souffle, quiche, charcuterie, even sourdough french toast or crepes, both savory and lightly sweet.



Sébastien Brunet is a fast-rising new star of the Touraine region of the Loire. Based in Vouvray at Chançay, Indre-et-Loire, just north of the river between Tours and Blois, he is helping to re-define Chenin Blanc.

Sébastien's a big, young guy, quiet and reserved – preferring, you sense, to let the wines do the talking.

His wines possess a minimalist beauty. They're perfectly ripe in both essential aromatics and structure, without any dilution or superfluity, a great achievement with Chenin Blanc in Vouvray, where most wines are over-cropped, under-ripe, and over-chaptalised. Sébastien's wines are quiet, sensitive, pure reflections of their terroir.

He works with Chenin Blanc only, from which he produces several styles, sparkling, dry in various degrees, and a couple of sweet wines. This is a grape which, in the right hands, can transform magically with every nuance of the soil and climate in which it's grown. Chenin Blanc has been planted in Vouvray since the 13th century, while the vineyard was first planted by the monks of Marmoutier, near Tours, which was founded in the 3rd century. While Orbois (aka Menu Pineau) is permitted, in fact it's rarely used.

Sébastien took over the family Domaine in 2006 at a young age. He attended the Lycée viticole d'Amboise where he became friends with Vincent Careme and to whose advice he listened. He has quietly steered the Domaine, created by his father in 1974 (and previously called La Roche Fleurie), into fine organic production, and the recognition of his peers, while two previous generations had cultivated vines but sold fruit to a local cooperative.

The Domaine comprises 15 hectares around the communes of Chançay and Vernou, along the valley of the Brenne, a small tributary of the Loire that runs perpendicular to the North, on which vines are sited on both the first hillside and the plateau behind. The most northerly plots are in the village of Reugny and follow the course of the Brenne down through Chançay, the hamlet of La Folie and onto Vernou, where the stream joins the Loire itself.

Soils are comprised of clay, limestone, and much silex, a type of quartz stone. The climate is cool and humid where the Atlantic meets Continental but sheltered to the north by the Coteau de Loir; it can be a challenge for organic viticulture, each year brings different weather, sometimes very wet, sometimes a heatwave, thus vintage variation, and consequent fascination. It's this terroir that gives Sébastien the base to produce magic and he's modest about the work he does to produce "simply ripe and healthy" grapes from it.

He occupies an amazing cellar in La Chançay that comprises 10 kilometres of tunnels carved out of the tufa (chalk) hillside and which was previously used as a mushroom farm. It provides perfect conditions for wine production, being cool and damp – but may be rather hazardous if you don't know where you're going. His presses are always very slow and gentle lasting around 4 hours and he always allows the wine to cold settle for up to 48h before fermentation. The cool of the settle and the low pH of the wine tends to block the malo from happening and there's a gentle tangential filtration before bottling to ensure stability.

Certified by 

"Sébastien Brunet took over the family domaine in 2007 after the passing of his father. Brunet has converted to organic viticulture, achieving certification in 2016. His production is 50/50 still/sparkling, and he focuses on dry wines, which he believes are a better vehicle for terroir than sweeter styles. He is certainly a modern Vouvray producer, making sparkling as well as a range of still, dry whites, and a sweet wine when nature permits. Wild fermentation is the norm here, and foudres are often used as the fermentation vessel. Brunet's Renaissance is benchmark dry Vouvrays." – Vinous