

Domaine des Baumard, Savennières, Clos du Papillon, Loire, France, 2006



Producer Profile

One of the Loire's most lauded producers, Florent Baumard has courted controversy by pursuing his own ideas and challenging the status quo.

In a deeply traditional region, Florent's early adoption of screwcaps and different vine trellising systems marked him out as the enfant terrible of Savennières. His mantra now encompasses a belief in the individuality of each vintage, believing it should be made with minimal intervention to allow the wine to reflect its vintage and unique character. His Savennières from the famous vineyards of Clos St Yves and Clos du Papillon are rich, yet with a balance and elegance that are unrivalled. His top cuvée of 'Trie Speciale' is only made in very exceptional vintages when grape quality is optimal. It is a wine full of paradox, honeyed and yet dry, rounded and yet firm. The rich fruit, tremendous weight and concentration ensure that it is a thoroughly memorable experience.

Viticulture

The Baumard approach to viticulture is a notable one, and it does make it easy to spot the Baumard vines in any given appellation. They are trained in a fashion Baumard describe as vignes hautes et larges (sometimes abbreviated to VHL); the larges refers to the distance between the vines, a remarkable 3 metres between the rows and 0.8 metres between each vine, whereas the hautes refers to the high trellising system employed, taking the vines to a height of more than 2 metres, the object being to obtain a large surface area of foliage. During the vegetative period they see limited leaf-thinning along their base, but otherwise there is little intervention at this time, not even topping-off of the upper shoots as they reach for the sky above. Between the rows, the soil is alternatively ploughed and grassed over, a methodology the Baumards have been following for well over 40 years. The harvest is manual, and the fruit transported in small plastic cages to minimise damage.

Winemaking

The fruit receives a very gentle well-judged pressing before fermentation largely in temperature-controlled steel, Florent preferring materials other than wood, both for fermentation and subsequent élevage. So wines such as the Clos du Papillon will be fermented and held en cuve until ready for bottling, a process which brings minimal contact with oxygen; this character comes through in the wines which often have a very precisely expressed bright fruit character, with sometimes a suggestion of reduction. When it comes to the matter of malolactic fermentation though Florent is less consistent; his own father trialled the technique but was unimpressed with its effect, and Florent has continued with the same ambivalent approach. He does not actively encourage the malolactic, but that is not to say it isn't there; sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't.

Tasting Note

Beautifully evolved aromas of honey, candied lemon, ripe apricots and a hint of wood smoke, whilst on the palate, lustrous layers unfold onto a textural palate lifted by Chenin's characteristic lively acid backbone'

Food Matching

This Chenin would work well with scallops or with North Africa cuisine.

Technical Details

Varieties:

Chenin Blanc 100%

ABV: 14.5%

Closure: Screw cap

Colour: White

Style: Still wine

Case Size: 12 x 75cl

Oak Ageing

No oak ageing

Awards

