

**GREAT WINE SEMINAR 1996**

Moderator: Robert M. Parker, Jr.

**DOMAINE DES BAUMARD**

*Presented by Florent Baumard*

This celebrated Anjou domaine is headquartered at Rochefort sur Loire, close to Angers. Florent Baumard took the reins in 1987. Most of the wines presented at this tasting, especially the older vintages, were made by his father Jean. Chenin Blanc, here called Pineau de la Loire, reaches extraordinary heights in this region, notably in the Coteaux du Layon where Clos de Sainte Catherine is situated. While facing north – an unusual orientation at this latitude – this hillside parcel enjoys favorable maturation owing to a sandy soil over schist. On any one vine, berries mature differently depending upon their exposure and location on the bunch. Harvesting, as dictated by AOC rules, is by hand in several *tries*. The Clos is one hectare in size. As to the wine, its “golden age” arrives after 25 to 30 years in bottle, and in the right vintages it may carry on for a half century (recorking may be required) as the remarkable 1945 proves without a doubt! Nearby is the fabled Quarts de Chaume, a cru distinct from Coteaux du Layon Chaume. The domaine also owns vines in Savennières, to the north of the Loire River, where the Clos du Papillon vineyard is located. Chenin vines are planted here on several soil types: volcanic schists, sandstones, and sand. Once again, multiple passes may be needed to pick suitably ripe fruit. In this case, however, the outcome is a dry white wine rather than one with degrees of sweetness. Whole berry pressing is employed at the domaine to avoid oxidation. Savennières is enjoyable in its first five years of life, but individual examples can develop favorably over two decades as the 1973 demonstrates.

Here are some intriguing food pairing ideas from the Baumards which no doubt reflect years of trial and error:

Quarts de Chaume – melon as a starter, foie gras, tarte au Maroilles (a traditional cheese-based tart of Northern France); desserts such as galette frangipane (cake with eggs and ground almonds), meringue glacée with pears or white peaches – but red fruits, apples and pineapple are not recommended.

## Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

---

**Savennières – hors d'oeuvres, delicate fish dishes, scallops and one of the rare wines to tolerate asparagus; old vintages show at their best with fish in sauce or vol au vent (puff pastry filled with seafood).**

### **Savennières Clos du Papillon 1993 \*\*\*(\*)**

*Pale yellow. The nose is very young, still floral, and displays pear and blanched nut. In the mouth, it is direct and incisive, concealing a concentration of fruit. Bone dry, undeveloped finish with a slight youthful bitterness.*

### **Savennières Clos du Papillon 1979 \*\*\*\***

*Bright yellow gold. Archetypal Loire Chenin aroma of wet wool with chalky notes, more muted than forthcoming. This 1979's taste profile is distinguished by an attractive creaminess offset by finely etched acidity. Lasting though subtle finale. At 17 years from vintage, it shows little evolution.*

### **Savennières Clos du Papillon 1973 \*\*\*(+)**

*Yellow to the eye. Understated nose of lemon and wet stone. The wine is opening on the palate and has gained flesh and dimension while still being supported by defining acidity, though the nerve is giving way to a slightly softer ending.*

### **Savennières Clos du Papillon 1989 \*\*\*\*+**

*Deep yellow gold. Ripeness of fruit, even at this age, marks the aroma, which is dominated by pear and quince. The wine offers tremendous purity of flavor: pear (Anjou, of course!), quince and a hint of honey. The 1989 has both weight and fat the other vintages do not possess, along with a softer conclusion. A vintage showing its original fruit maturity. Between 14% and 15% alcohol.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1993 \*\*\*(\*+)**

*Yellow gold. Soft, subtle nose with complex notes of wool and botrytis. The wine surprises on the palate with its superb focus and jewel-like equilibrium. There is an expression of very pure botrytis, and the wine finishes with nerve and tension.*

### **Coteaux du Layon Clos de Sainte Catherine 1990 \*\*\*\*(+)**

*Deep gold. The aroma conveys ripeness and concentration yet is mostly held in check, with a mere suggestion of dried fruit. On the palate, this Layon is notably rich and textured with marked sweetness and matching acidity, imparting a sense of balance and harmony. Subtle, youthful and still undeveloped with evident promise. 14.5% alcohol.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1990 \*\*\*\*(+)**

*Yellow gold. Dense, focused nose with youthful intensity, even pungency. Accents of wool, quince and ripe pear. The taste possesses fabulously pure, ripe fruit and is ideally balanced. The finish is young, yet to express itself, sweet and again ripe in its final impression. Will have an excellent future.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1976 \*\*\*\***

*Deep yellow gold. Highly concentrated with marked botrytis oiliness and wool. Rich in its mouth-feel yet reticent. Has developed a softness and shows faint dried yellow fruit in the aftertaste. Concealed, embedded acidity. All the grapes for this wine were affected by noble rot, giving it a distinctive personality.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1969 \*\*\*\***

*Deep yellow gold. The nose offers moderate evolution and understated notes of dried fruit and wool. On the palate, this 1969 again shows its maturity in a resolved profile, rich and sweet but also very well-balanced by defining acidity.*

### **Coteaux du Layon Clos de Sainte Catherine 1964 (magnum) \*\*\*\*+**

*Very deep yellow gold. Distinctly evolved in its nutty and wooly accents and mature restraint. Rich as it enters the mouth, then falls away, indicating its age. Yet the 1964 finishes with surprising freshness from that marvelous Chenin acidity.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1962 (magnum) \*\*\*\*\***

*Dark yellow gold. Muted, maturing aromatic expression, quite rich and honeyed. While this 1962, at 34 years of age, seems fully mature, it offers terrific focus and an explosion of flavors on the palate, along with superb balance. Still vital and in its prime.*

### **Coteaux du Layon Clos de Sainte Catherine 1959 \*\*\*\*\***

*Slightly tawny yellow. Multidimensional bouquet of nut and toffee showing its bottle development. The taste profile confirms the wine's maturity, with toffee and hazelnut flavors, but the wine retains marvelous acidity, keeping it fresh and alive. Truly outstanding.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1959 \*\*\*\*\***

*Dark yellow gold. Stunning, complex bouquet of honey, nut and quince jam. Rich and sweet but beautifully defined and poised. The finish conveys a dry impression from masked acidity and is remarkably long. Precisely calibrated and vivacious for a wine of its age. Captivating.*

### **Quarts de Chaume 1955 \*\*\*\*\***

*Dark yellow. Resolved, rich nose of honey. The wine shows more evolution on the palate and is beginning to weaken, though there is a subtle, lingering expression of honey. Just past its peak.*

### **Coteaux du Layon Clos de Sainte Catherine 1945 \*\*\*\*\***

*Deep dark yellow. The nose is completely open and resolved with a mature subtlety. This 1945 is seductively rich as it enters the mouth. Alluring and harmonious with terrific length. This is a wine of great class that is at its apogee after a half century in bottle. There was a terrible frost this year, which saw 10% of a normal harvest according to Florent Baumard.*