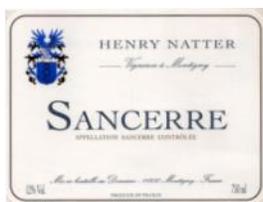


# Domaine Henry Natter

## Sancerre



Henry and enologist Cécile Natter started their domaine in 1974 from scratch, beginning with a family hectare in Montigny. They married, planted half of that hectare on a hillside running up behind the village, and started a family. This was in Sancerre's southwestern heights, an area widely planted to vines before phylloxera. Afterward, apart from a few scattered vineyards, the viticultural reconstruction generally passed these hillsides by and the area became a breadbasket for the local grain farmers. The Natter family domaine was the first on this side of the modern appellation of Sancerre and remains the only winemaking

domaine in Montigny, a terroir noted for its preponderance of *terres blanches*, or Kimmeridgian Marls. (Kimmeridgian is found on the hilltops curving around the western edge of the appellation; *Caillottes*, or Oxfordian limestone, is found in the center of the appellation; and flint or silex is found along the fault line running north-south through the town of Sancerre itself.) This soil gives great power to the wines, and a remarkable ability to age without oxidation. Stored properly, a top twenty-year-old Natter Sancerre retains astonishing freshness while evolving down to its elemental, mineral base. Almost no one thinks of old Sancerre, which is a shame because the good ones can amaze.

Today, Henry and Cécile farm 23 hectares (57 acres) of vines. The breakdown is 19 hectares (47 acres) of Sauvignon and 4 hectares (10 acres) of Pinot Noir for red and rosé. From the beginning in 1974, farming and winemaking practices here have been noteworthy. Organic composts and homeopathic applications have always been used in place of chemical fertilizers (the right is reserved to use synthetic fungicides in particularly difficult years—above all, for example, during a wet year after hail damage when rot could ravage an entire crop). Fermentations are routinely made in huge old wood casks (*foudres*) normally with indigenous yeasts, which stands in contrast to the far more typical production of Sancerre in steel or fiberglass tanks with commercial yeasts. Sancerre, *chez* Natter, is made the way it used to be made.

Henry manages the vineyards while Cécile manages the fermentations and the upbringing of the wines. These days they're helped by daughter Mathilde and son Vincent. A Hmong is also full-time in their employ. He is the nephew of a married couple who had been relocated from Laos to a Hmong refugee camp near Bourges in the 1980s. This couple originally came to the domaine as vineyard workers, and they stayed on for nearly a decade before their nephew assumed their responsibilities. Many more Hmong come to help during the harvest.

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