

Domaine Richou

Anjou



The Wines:

- *Anjou Blanc “Chauvigné”*: Chenin Blanc. The emphasis here is on freshness and minerality, with bright aromatic notes, lemon high tones, and richly long, elegant fruit. At around 1,700 cases, *Chauvigné* is the domain’s largest production. Two-thirds comes from a 7.4-acre vineyard named Violettes growing in volcanic schists soils, planted in 1980 (2.5 acres), then in 1986 (1.2 acres.) and 1998 (3.7 acres); and one third comes from their Rogeries vineyard, growing in a streak of glassy volcanic soil known as rhyolites. Harvest is by hand with two passes through the vines, and the wine is made mostly in tank, with some 20% done in older barrels. Malolactic fermentation rarely takes place because of Chenin’s innate acidity and Richou’s coldcellar.
- *Anjou Blanc “Les Rogeries”*: Chenin Blanc. This is a dense, richly plump and honeyed Chenin lifted by driving acidity and minerality. It comes from a 10.4-acre vineyard growing in meager rhyolites soil. Harvest is by hand with two passes and the yield is quite low. The élevage lasts as long as 16 months on the lees in new and old barrels. RS is typically between 2.5 and 3.5 g/l. Production averages 500 cases.
- *Savennières “La Bigottière”*: Chenin Blanc. La Bigottière is the name of the three-acre parcel Richou farms in Savennières, right behind the Roche aux Moines cru. The soil here is sandy quartz overtop a bed of schist. The brothers acquired the parcel in 2009 and replanted it that year and the next. The wine ferments spontaneously and is raised in a mixture of 350-liter barrels (a small percentage of which is new) and amphora. Malo normally doesn’t take place. Production averages 550 cases.
- *L’R osé*: This is Richou’s top rosé, made with Cabernet Sauvignon with often a dollop of Cabernet Franc. Coming from low yields, it’s a substantial rosé, with spicy intensity and an excellent balance between sweetness and austerity. The lot number on the back label is the vintage year.
- *Anjou Gamay “Le Champ de la Pierre”*: This comes from Les Chateliers, a 9.6-acre parcel of Gamay growing in schists quartz soil. From this parcel comes a base cuvée of Gamay (named after the vineyard), and this top cuvée from a subplot of Gamay growing on high ground. Three-fourths is fermented traditionally, and one-quarter is fermented whole cluster (carbonic). The year depending, 250 to 400 cases are made—and only in good years is it separated out from the Chateliers cuvée.

- *Anjou Rouge "4 Chemins"*: Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. This is full of fresh rich fruit and makes a terrific bistro wine. It is made in tank primarily from younger vine Cabernet Franc with a dollop of Cabernet Sauvignon. These varieties grow in Aubance schists in two parcels totaling 2.8 hectares, or nearly 7 acres. Ideal yield is around 40 h/ha and rough annual production is 1,250 cases.
- *Anjou-Villages Brissac*: "Didier Richou," writes Clive Coates, "produces one of the best Anjou-Villages." A blend of roughly equal parts Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, this comes from two parcels in the Brissac Valley totaling just over seven acres (the Franc parcel is a tiny bit larger). The soil is based on gray schists and quartz, and the wine is raised in tank for around eighteen months before bottling. AOC Brissac was codified in 1998.
- *Les "D" en Bulles*: The D stands for Didier and Damien, and the bulles refers to bubbles. This is a *méthode ancestrale* pétillant, made without any of the three additions of sugar (no chaptalization for fermentation, no sweet yeast starter at bottling, and no dosage at disgorgement). The blend is 2/3s Chardonnay and 1/3 Chenin, and the wine rests eighteen months on its lees. Production averages 750 cases.
- *Dom Nature Crémant de Loire Brut*: The blend is 90% Chardonnay from their best parcel of this grape and 10% Chenin from the Rogeries vineyard. It is made in older barrel and rests on its lees for three to four years before bottling. This is also a *méthode ancestrale* wine made without any sugar additions, and without fining or filtration.
- *Côteaux de l'Aubance "Les 3 Demoiselles"*: Les 3 Demoiselles is only made in years of great botrytis. It is, as Andrew Jefford writes in *The New France*, "almost always one of the appellation's best wines." Most of this wine comes from a 2-acre parcel of Chenin Blanc planted in 1924. This is one of those rare late harvest Chenins with great complexity and great elegance. If you want to understand why Côteaux de l'Aubance is so prized for the lift and finesse inherent in its late harvest renditions, this would be an excellent education.