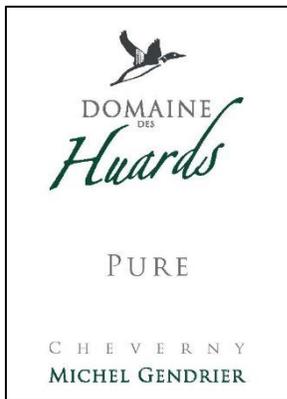


Domaine des Huards

Cour-Cheverny & Cheverny

(CA sales only)



Domaine des Huards has been in the Gendrier family since 1846. In the 1950s, the family farmed 10 acres of vines, mostly Romorantin. In the 1960s, more parcels were planted as their focus on the domain's viticulture increased significantly. In the 1970s, Michael, the seventh generation Gendrier, quit using chemicals in the vines and moved in an organic and then biodynamic direction, receiving certification in 1998. His son Alex grew up with biodynamics and is now full time at the domain with Michael, helping to manage its 94 acres of vines (along with 91 acres of forest and fields, plus a herd of sheep).

The domain is in Cheverny, an appellation of close to 1,600 acres in eastern Touraine, about a third of the way from Tours to Sancerre. It's also in the tiny appellation of Cour-Cheverny, which currently has a vineyard surface of a mere 130+ acres dedicated solely to the rare Romorantin (Cheverny, the sister and overlapping appellation, is reserved for a range of other Loire varieties). All of Huards' vines are within 850 meters of the winery, meaning that the grapes arrive to the press freshly hand-harvested—they do not buy any outside fruit—and from vine to bottle every step is done as simply and transparently as possible. Ferments are spontaneous, stainless steel is preferred for upbringing because it's the most neutral, and the only addition to the wine is a small amount of SO₂. There's no fining and only a light filtration at bottling.

Equally significant is the fact that for more than twenty years now their vines have been farmed organically and biodynamically. All of that care results in wines that are extraordinarily lifted, vibrant, and dynamic renditions of the Loire's cool-climate limestone terroirs—and equally so, for both colors.

The family's specialty continues to be that stubborn oddity, Romorantin. Their oldest parcel of the grape goes back to 1922, planted by Eugène Gendrier; the most recent parcel was planted in 2016 and consists of non-grafted Romorantin in sandy soils in hopes of obtaining an even finer expression. (The Loire boasts a handful of growers who have planted vines on their own rootstocks in sites that are judged inhospitable to phylloxera, all in search of what their forefathers' wine tasted like before the epidemic. Typically, what's found is a finer, more elegant and longer expression of the wine. Of course, such plantations are at risk, and most of these growers accept that they may lose these parcels in short order.) The Gendriers grow nearly 25 acres of Romorantin, of which 2.5 acres is the non-grafted parcel, and the variety makes up over a quarter of the family's total surface of vines.

In addition, they grow Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Gamay. The soils vary from calcareous clay, favoring Pinot Noir and Romorantin, to siliceous clay favoring Gamay. Some plots have a preponderance of sand, others flint. For all, the bedrock is limestone, and it's close to the surface.

About the origins of Romorantin, it's one of the several famous descendants of Gouais Blanc and Pinot Noir (a list that includes Aligoté, Auxerrois, Chardonnay, Gamay, and Melon), or, more specifically, Gouais Blanc and Pinot Fin Teinturier (itself a direct mutation of Pinot Noir). Legend has it that King François the 1er introduced Romorantin to Touraine in 1519 by ordering 80,000 vines to be taken from its home in Burgundy and planted near the village of Romorantin, where his mother often stayed. Supposedly François wanted to build a chateau there, which turned out to be Chambord.

Unfortunately, there is no hard data to support this story. Romorantin's earliest mention in the written record comes in a dictionary of grape varieties in France, published in 1868. The oldest known Romorantin vines, a 0.9-acre plot owned by Domaine Henry Marionnet just outside of the Cour-Cheverny appellation, is estimated to date from around 1820 (in Burgundy today there's not a vine to be found). Still, François the 1er was a pivotal figure in French history and more specifically in the history of the Loire Valley, and if any one man were responsible for this idiosyncratic grape holding extinction at bay in a remote corner of the Loire, it would befit him.

An average year at the domain sees 16,500 cases produced among all the wines.

<http://www.domainedeshuards.com/en/>