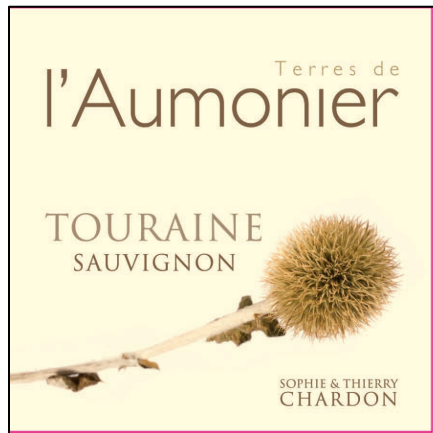


Domaine de l'Aumonier

Touraine



Presented with a synchronicity of events, Sophie and Thierry Chardon founded Domaine de L'Aumonier in 1996 in the far eastern reaches of the Touraine appellation. Thierry's parents were growers in the region, but Thierry had gone to Paris to fulfill a childhood dream of becoming a firefighter. Toward the end of his five-year employment contract he met Sophie, then a student, and she, or his infatuation with her, persuaded him to leave Paris and firefighting. He returned to Mareuil-sur-Cher to discover that the man who had bought his parents' vines needed a vineyard manager. Thierry proposed himself, and his father stepped up to train him. Six years later, the young couple inherited seven acres of vines from Sophie's grandfather. They took the vines without any thought of growing beyond them. Indeed, the original intent was

to sell the grapes to a *négociant*, but then within weeks a retired grower got wind of the transaction and offered to sell them 25-acres of vines. Suddenly, the door was open to start a domaine. Thierry was game—but only if Sophie joined him on the adventure. She accepted.

Ironically, it was Thierry's older brother who was supposed to have continued the family tradition. He started working with his father in the vines in 1977, but three consecutive years of frost, rain, and rot disgusted him and he quit. What did he do? Became a firefighter in Blois, rising to the rank of colonel.

The new domaine was blessed with the family name of Sophie's grandparents who bequeathed them the original seven acres: L'Aumonier, a name that since the Middle Ages has referred to a man of faith—a chaplain—responsible for distributing alms to the poor.

Apart from vines, the young couple had nothing beyond their parents' support and a banker who believed in them. Once committed, however, providence moved too: upon informing his employer that he would be going full-time on his own project, the man offered to sell his grapes to Thierry! In 1997 they bought the necessary equipment and broke ground on a winery and cellar. In 2003, they went organic in the vines, receiving certification from Ecocert three years later. Eventually they expanded their vineyard acreage to 86 and their range from Sauvignon to include Chenin, a handful of reds, and several sparklers, but the core of their production remains Sauvignon Blanc. Of the 86 acres, 49 are planted to the variety. In addition, they buy grapes from 30 acres from a neighboring organic grower, and half of those vines are Sauvignon.

Thierry handles the vines and winemaking; Sophie the sales and administration, but she's often in the cellar and always in the harvest. They are the kings, she says, of versatility. All the tastings and blending decisions they do together.

Every year they replant a bit of Sauvignon to maintain healthy vineyards in the face of climate change and the vine disease esca (widespread in the Loire). They are also slowly expanding their holdings of Gamay and Malbec. Following the 2022 harvest, the domaine earned certification for biodynamic farming.

<https://www.domaineaumonier.com/home-1>