



The bucolic Anjou nearing harvest



CLOS DE L'ELU

There is a beautiful and timeless quality to the architecture of Anjou. Anchored by Angers in the west and Saumur further to the east, the buildings of this area are wonderfully monochromatic with pale but warm limestone walls and somber black slate roofs. So commonplace is this pattern of architecture that it is easy to become disoriented and not knowing exactly where you are until you look for the closest steeple or road sign. This color palette is not a unique quirk of the local masons but the result of eons of geological history. Anjou is where the border between the ancient carboniferous bedrock of the Cambrian gives way to the tuffeau of the Cretaceous, or more simply, where schist, quartz and slate transition to limestone and chalk.

If that was the whole of the geological story Anjou had to tell, it would be interesting enough, but there are several other plots to reveal. The gentle landscape of the Loire Valley is a product of countless centuries of wearing down of the earth and carrying

it out to the Atlantic. This is not the Mosel or the Ribeira Sacra and while it may not be dramatic it has its own uniquely comforting charm. Where ridges and hills do exist they are carved by the tributaries of the lazy Loire – such as the Angevin Layon and Aubance. These parallel rivers flow from the southwest to the northeast both joining the Loire slightly downstream from Angers. Each is bounded by gentle slopes with the best vineyards located on the respective north banks of each, giving them full southern exposure. This is the setting for Clos de l'Elu.

Totalling 22 hectares spread over 30 different plots, Clos de l'Elu is located in the tiny village of Saint-Aubin de Luigne. The sites that Clos de l'Elu farms are scattered from the village of Chaume, famous for its sweet style of botrytized Chenin Blanc, to Chaudefons-sur-Layon near the confluence of the Layon and Loire. In this warmer and drier part of the Anjou red varieties are widely cultivated along side the traditional Chenin Blanc.



Clos de l'Elu was originally established by two brothers in the 1950s who sold their grapes to local negociants and in 2008 they retired selling their estate to Thomas and Charlotte Carsin. Thomas, an agricultural engineer by training became enamored with viticulture during his studies and once his formal education was complete, he traveled to Sonoma, Champagne and Provence supporting himself as a viticultural consultant while learning enology by working in various cellars. When Charlotte and Thomas Carsin found Clos de l'Elu for sale, it was an easy, if life-changing decision to make.

Thomas farms Clos de l'Elu organically with continuing experiments with biodynamics. After years of experience advising others he has put his principles to work at his own estate: native cover crops are encouraged, the soil is tilled and no synthetic products are employed. These efforts have brought new life to the soils allowing him to preserve many of the old vines on the property. New plantings have been made using selection massale to preserve the diversity of his sites. About half of his vineyards are planted with equal proportions of Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc – the two most common varieties grown in the Anjou with smaller plantings of Gamay, Grolleau, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pineau d'Aunis. Each plot and variety is harvested by hand and brought to the cellar where the white are pressed and allowed a short period to settle. Most of the red wines are whole cluster fermentations. Only natural yeasts are employed, macerations are long and the wines age in tank, barrel or amphorae. Sulfur usage is minimal and often added just before bottling.

FACTS at a GLANCE

Founded	2008
Proprietor	Thomas & Charlotte Carsin
Winemaker	Thomas Carsin
Size	22 ha
Elevation	60 – 80 meters above sea level
Soils	Schist
Vine Age	20 – 70
Varieties	Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Gamay, Grolleau, Pineau d'Aunis
Farming	Certified organic (ECOCERT)
Harvest	Manual
Cellar	Gentle pressing for the whites, reds whole cluster, indigenous yeast fermentation in neutral barrel or vats, long macerations, aging in tank, barrel or amphorae, minimal SO2

