

DAMIEN LAUREAU

Savennières L'Alliance (Formerly La Petite Roche)

THE ESTATE

Of all the regions of the Loire valley that make wines from Chenin Blanc, Savennières is perhaps the most challenging. Partly due to the schistous terroir, but also because growers in the region have had a tendency to produce wines reductively. Until the last decade, most also harvested their grapes with a potential alcohol of 12°, picking them when they were still green in color. All of these practices resulted in backward, stern and fairly austere wines that took at least a decade to reach a point where they began to show their charms. Many growers in the region still follow this very traditional method to produce Savennières, and it is these wines that have largely defined “typicity.” Recently this trend has begun to change. Better farming, in many cases biodynamic or organic, reduced yields, hand harvesting grapes that are golden in color, and using neutral wood barrels for aging, and less sulfur during winemaking. These deliberate steps produce more approachable wines that do not require aging or a rigorous, intellectual understanding of the charms of Chenin grown on schist in order to enjoy them.



Working out of a tiny shed, Damien Laureau is one of Savennières new pioneering winemakers. Fruit extracts and other non-synthetic treatments are used on the vines in place of harsh chemicals, and quite frankly, you can tell it just by looking at the vineyards. They feel alive, with wildlife and indigenous plants sharing the space with Damien’s healthy vines of Chenin Blanc. Damien harvests just when the grapes turn yellow to take advantage of the richness that the sun brings. As a result, the wines are a beautiful balance of richness, concentration, lively acidity, and length.

THE DETAILS

L'Alliance is sourced from La Petite Roche, a lieu-dit just west of the village of Savennières located on a gentle southern and southeastern oriented slope facing the Loire river. Here Damien has some younger vines of Chenin planted on sandy grey schist soils. While fruit from La Petite Roche makes up the majority of the blend, there is a small percentage press wine from Genêts that is added.

COUNTRY

France

APPELLATION

Savennières

ELEVATION

20-30 meters

VARIETIES

Chenin Blanc

SOIL

Schist, sand, clay

VINE AGE

10-50 years old

FARMING

Certified organic (ECOCERT)

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, natural yeast fermentation in tank

AGING

10 months in tank on the fine lees, bottled unfiltered & unfiltered

FOR THE RECORD

The nose is very expressive, and very pure, reminiscent of citrus fruits rubbed on stone, with a particular touch of bitter lime. The palate starts off cool and lean, with some light and sandy fruit. Pure and lightly smoky, stony, with a little weight and a bitter grip in the finish. This is a charming, entry-level Savennières. – Chris Kissack

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**JON-DAVID
HEADRICK
SELECTIONS**