

# DAMIEN LAUREAU

## Savennières La Roche aux Moines

### 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

Damien’s leases just .25 ha of younger vines in Roche-aux-Moines - a cru of Savennières renown for its volcanic schist soils, and silky, complex and age-worthy wines. A well-exposed site it can be harvested late without danger of botrytis. Damien ferments this wine in two oak casks where it ages for 14 months. Due to his non-interventionist approach to winemaking, this cuvée may or may not go through malo depending on the vintage.

#### COUNTRY

France

#### APPELLATION

Savennières Roche-aux-Moines

#### ELEVATION

50-55 meters

#### VARIETIES

Chenin Blanc

#### SOIL

Schist, sand

#### VINE AGE

8-16 years old

#### FARMING

Certified organic (ECOCERT)

#### FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, natural yeast fermentation in two 400L French oak barrels

#### AGING

14 months in two 400L French oak barrels, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered

### FOR THE RECORD

All in all, superb. I challenge any Savennières-deniers to taste this and not be completely enchanted.

– 2015 Roche-aux-Moines – Chris Kissack – 97 points

