



Harvest 2010 at Domaine du Viking



DOMAINE DU VIKING

In the early part of the 20th century, most of Vouvray (like much of viticultural France) was worked by farmers in polyculture. Cows, sheep, and grain were raised alongside vines. Such was the case for the land belonging to Lionel and Françoise Gauthier, the owners of Domaine du Viking. Françoise's grandparents owned just 2 hectares of vines in the early 1940's along with animals and cereals. Winemaking was something that was done for family and local consumption. All of that changed on August 11, 1944 when Françoise's grandfather, Maurice, was killed by Nazi soldiers after being caught trying to blow up some train tracks. His young son, Françoise's father, was suddenly in charge and in an effort to keep the family afloat, converted all of the land into vineyards. The rest, as they say, is history.

Most of Lionel and Françoise's 13 hectares are not on the famous chalk (tuffeau) soils that make up over 90% of Vouvray but on the hard silex soils of the northern tip of the appellation. This silex produces crisp, mineral, and long-aging Vouvrays that bring to mind great Riesling. The style chez Le Viking (as he refers to himself with only a small degree of irony) is called *sec tendre*. This "tender dry" style allows for the sugar levels of a demi-sec but with the acidity level of a great Sancerre or Chablis. If you're into Riesling, you're probably going to like this style.

The winery itself isn't so much of a winery as it is a garage. Chestnut is favored for the barrels although more and more wine is being vinified in tank these days. Indigenous yeasts start fermentation and there is little manipulation. These



are wines that simply happen. As such, the sugar levels can vary wildly from year to year. Acidity and minerality, however, are always very present. In the best of vintages, Lionel will make Cuvée Aurélie, a late harvest wine in an SGN fashion. This cuvée will slowly ferment in chestnut barrels for at least two years before bottling and then for additional years in his cellar – there are always older vintages of this cuvée available. Lionel also makes a delicious sparkling Vouvrays that is aged on its lees for 12 months and finished with a very small dosage.

It is fair to say that Lionel Gauthier is a bit of a misfit in Vouvrays. The son of a butcher from Nantes, Lionel doesn't come from the area, has (or had at one point) blond hair that is atypical in Vouvrays, and eats like a Viking. At least that is what his friends thought when they started calling him the "Viking" several years ago. After a few years, the name "Viking" had stuck, so in 1989, Lionel decided to rename the property. It can be said without any equivocation that Lionel Gauthier can eat more sweetbreads than you can. Besides that, the man can make a serious Vouvrays.



FACTS at a GLANCE

Founded	1944
Proprietor	Lionel & Françoise Gauthier
Winemaker	Lionel Gauthier
Size	13 ha
Elevation	75–125 meters above sea level
Soils	Silex
Vine Age	15 – 60+
Varieties	Chenin Blanc, Grolleau
Farming	Sustainable
Harvest	Manual
Cellar	Natural yeast fermentation in tank, aging in tank, chestnut or French oak barrels