



JEAN-FRANÇOIS MÉRIEAU

It sometimes seems like Jean-François Mérieau's mind goes faster than his hands. Although he already produces some of the most respected and sought-after wines of the Touraine, he's not satisfied and is currently looking for new ways to express the old vines and rich landscape that is the Domaine Jean-François Mérieau.

Based in the tiny village of Saint-Julien-de-Chédon (which doesn't seem much changed since the 17th century), Jean-François' property stretches to almost 35 hectares planted to Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Noir, Cot, Pineau d'Aunis, Gamay and Chardonnay. Many of the vines are quite old, including the Pineau d'Aunis which is over 100 years old and the Cot, the youngest of which are 50 years old and the oldest over 100. Unlike most Touraine producers, the vineyards are plowed and the property is in conversion to organic certification. Vineyard work is all

manual and no commercial yeasts are used in the vinification of a dizzying array of wines – in typical fashion for the Touraine. Mineral whites, racy and savory reds, sparkling wines and sweet wines, all are on the menu at this address.

The winery is based on a rich history that stretches back for generations. It's not unusual to see three generations in the winery at the same time. Much of the winery is in a cave that was carved during the 14th century. The "new" structure that houses many of the fermentation tanks was used by American soldiers during World War I and some left inscriptions on the walls. The ramshackle tasting room, fronting the subterranean cellars resembles an old relative's attic as much for the clutter than the chance that you're about to stumble upon an undiscovered treasure. This is the essence of the Touraine, a place overshadowed in many regards by its neighbors but just starting to get the atten-



tion of critics and Loire valley enthusiasts for its ability to produce engaging wines that are friendly at the table and on the wallet.

Despite the quaintness, dustiness and disorder of the tasting room, the wines, are anything but old-fashioned. The Sauvignon Blanc bottling benefit from the rich clay and limestone soils and are exotic and often rich with underlying brightness and acidity. The new Chenin Blanc is racy and tinged with apple and stony flavors. The rosé of Pineau d'Aunis is exuberant and gregarious. The old vine Gamay and Cot are snappy with delicious, lingering fruit. The sparkling wines are a hand-harvested, vintage Touraine with little dosage.

This is the real deal in Touraine.



FACTS at a GLANCE

Founded	2000
Proprietor	Famille Mérieau
Winemaker	Jean-François Mérieau
Size	35 ha
Elevation	120 meters above sea level
Soils	Clay limestone
Vine Age	10 – 100+
Varieties	Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Gamay, Grolleau, Pineau d'Aunis
Farming	Organic conversion (ECOCERT)
Harvest	Manual
Cellar	Natural yeast fermentation in tank, pneumatic pressing for the whites, destemming for the reds, aging in tank or barrel