

Saumur & Saumur-Champigny

These western Loire appellations are home to the most famous, high-quality, pure Cabernet Franc wines in the world. Jim Budd looks at the terroir, tradition and trends

SAUMUR IS AT the western end of the Loire's major red-wine region that includes Chinon, Bourgueil and St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil in western Touraine. Although outside France the Loire is often considered a white wine region, 45% of the region's wines are red or rosé.

Cabernet Franc is very much the dominant variety here; combined, these appellations are the world's most important source of high-quality pure Cabernet Franc.

The base rock throughout the Saumur region is limestone with varying depth of soil (down to none at all) that is very sandy in places, such as at the top of the famous Les Poyeux vineyard. There are also clay and flint soils and a few vines on gravel near the River Thouet.

Drilling down

Of the three Saumur red wine appellations, Saumur-Champigny is now the most important. However, this separate appellation was only created in 1957 – more than 20 years after Saumur Rouge. When the straight Saumur appellations were created in 1936, the production of red wine was far less important in the Saumur-Champigny zone than it is today.

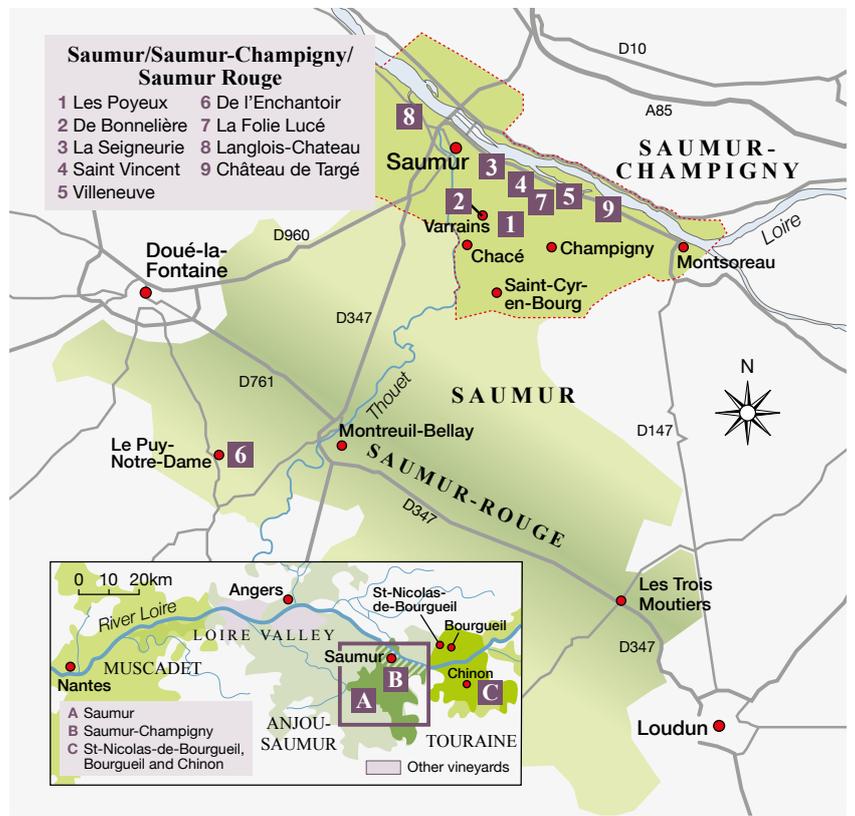
Five of the eight communes that make up AC Saumur-Champigny run along the Loire from Montsoreau westwards to Saumur. The vines are on the higher ground and are rarely visible from the river. The vineyard area rises quite steeply in parts, south towards the village of Champigny and west to Saumur, where the slope is very steep around the château. The communes of Varrains, Chacé and St-Cyr-en-Bourg lie southeast of Saumur. Here the slopes tend to be gentler.

With 32 communes across three départements, Saumur Rouge covers a large and varied area. However, the total production is only a little more than a third of that made in the eight communes of Saumur-Champigny. Many of the grapes grown here go to make Saumur Mousseux and Crémant de Loire.

Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame is a much more recent creation and has yet to really take off. Le Puy Notre Dame is the highest point in the Saumur region and it does have a tradition of making well-structured, long-lived reds. However, the appellation name is confusing as rather than just being centred on Le Puy-Notre-Dame, the new appellation extends from Les Trois Moutiers in the east to Doué-la-Fontaine in the west.

While oak use is widespread, especially for prestige cuvées, 400- to 600-litre barrels are often favoured and there is an emphasis on not over-oaking. Producers also try to avoid picking over-ripe grapes in a bid to maintain a real Loire freshness. There is a trend towards single-vineyard bottlings too, which suggests that Loire producers identify with Burgundy rather than Bordeaux.

Jim Budd has been the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire since the Awards' inception in 2004



Saumur & Saumur-Champigny: know your vintages

2015 Hot, dry summer then heavy September rain. Young wines are delicious. **Drink** 2016-2030

2014 Cool summer then fine September. Very well balanced. Excellent now but long ageing potential. **Drink** 2016-2030

2013 A year to forget. Late flowering, variable maturity – a real test for producers. **Drink** 2016-2019

2012 Frost and hail reduced yields. Very wet October. Medium-

weight wines. **Drink** 2016-2022

2011 Poor summer after exceptional spring. Wines drinking well now. **Drink** 2016-2024

2010 Very good year: ripe, balanced wines. Is it better than 2009? **Drink** 2016-2030

2009 Hot year, concentrated, rich, quite tannic wines. **Drink** 2016-2025

2008 A classic mid-weight vintage. Good now but will age. **Drink** 2016-2025

Saumur & Saumur-Champigny: the facts

Saumur Rouge

- AC created in 1936
- 32 communes of 390ha
- Annual production of 30,000hl
- Yield of 57hl/ha

Saumur-Champigny

- AC created in 1957
- Eight communes of 1,500ha
- Annual production of 78,000hl
- Yield of 57hl/ha

Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame

- AC created in 2009
- 17 communes (parcels identified in advance)
- Annual production of 2,000hl
- Yield of 50hl/ha ➤

The results

With 66% of wines recommended, this was a solid tasting showcasing well-made, pure Cabernet Franc wines across five varied vintages. Christelle Guibert reports

CABERNET FRANC MAY have been living in the shadow of Cabernet Sauvignon for years, but it is finally starting to get the recognition it deserves. While Cabernet Sauvignon is big, bold and tannic, Cabernet Franc seems more feminine with its fragrant, graceful red fruit and silky texture. So how do Loire Cabernet Francs stack up?

Our panel said consumers were still 'under the misconception' that Saumur wines were 'only good for drinking in a French bistro', said Laure Patry. Jim Budd agreed: 'In books written in the 1950s and '60s, Loire wines were described as light and fruity. Yes, some are still simple and quaffable but they can also be serious and ageworthy.' He said it was Chinon that had the long reputation for making quality Cabernet Franc wines with great ageing potential, as Saumur was focused on white and rosé up until about 50 years ago.

The other reason consumers might dismiss Saumur reds could be related to their lack of consistency. Budd explained: 'The wines change dramatically from vintage to vintage. Producer to producer too. Unless you are a real connoisseur of the Loire, you will probably find it pretty difficult to enjoy the tricky vintages.'

In this tasting, the 2015s stood out as having great potential. While there were only a small number submitted (only the entry-level cuvées had been bottled when our tasting was held in March), Chris Kissack felt they had 'a great sense of fruit purity and texture and were generally well balanced'. All three tasters said it would be interesting to taste the premium cuvées once they were released. Budd found the 2014s 'classic Loire reds: attractive ripe fruit and nicely balanced structure and acidity - clearly the best vintage since 2010'. Like the '15s, he noted that many of the top cuvées were not yet released, but the younger wines in this tasting were drinking well now and should age well.

All three judges commented that these two most

'Nicely managed tannins, ripe fruit and pure, well-defined characters' Chris Kissack

recent vintages were very welcome in the region after the very challenging 2012 and 2013 seasons. Of the latter, Kissack said that while 2013 was not a year to extol, he found one or two wines in this tasting that stood out: 'Any winemaker who produced something attractive, pure and fresh from this vintage can be proud.' He also said that the reds tasted from the often overlooked 2011 vintage also performed well, 'showing signs of maturity but also richness and softness'.

Despite vintage variation, the panel found the wines very consistent in quality and Loire Cabernet Franc typicity. 'I thought the tannins were nicely managed, the fruit was ripe, but not overripe, and I noted pure and well-defined characters in a lot of them,' said Kissack.

Producers were allowed to submit wines from the three appellations. Although outnumbered by Saumur-Champigny with 54 of the 74 entries, the straight Saumurs (with 16 wines) performed well, while only one of the four Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame wines impressed. For consumers looking for early-drinking styles, Budd felt 'there was less of a difference between appellations'.

The panel was unanimously excited about the future of Cabernet Franc from the Saumur region, applauding the movement toward greater freshness and lower alcohols. 'The wines in this tasting all offer excellent value for money', said Patry, and if you found older vintages on restaurant wine lists - 'say a 1985 vintage for about £100' - you would be getting a real bargain. 'You'd have to pay double the price for a Bordeaux or Californian red with the same age,' she added.

The scores

74 wines tasted

Exceptional

0

Outstanding

2

Highly Recommended

25

Recommended

33

Commended

11

Fair

3

Poor

0

Faulty

0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit latest-release red wines (two wines per producer max) from Saumur, Saumur-Champigny and Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame.

The judges

Jim Budd



Budd is the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire. He has written about wine since 1988 and contributed to Decanter since 1989. Budd also writes the awarded Jimsloire.blogspot.com and is a

member of Les5duvin.wordpress.com blog. He contributes to Hugh Johnson's Pocket Wine Book and is a keen photographer.

Chris Kissack



Kissack has published the subscription site TheWinedoctor.com, since 2000. He has focused on the Loire for many years, and has been a frequent visitor since 1993, visiting domaines,

experiencing the vineyards and harvests, and reporting on the winemakers and their wines throughout the year.

Laure Patry



Patry attended sommelier school in Angers in the Loire before moving to London in 2003. She worked for eight years for Gordon Ramsay Holdings at Claridges and Maze and then

joined Jason Atherton at Pollen Street Social. She and Atherton have now set up Social Wine and Tapas, a retail and wine bar.

Outstanding 95-97pts



Domaine la Bonnelière, Les Poyeux, Saumur-Champigny 2014

Decanter average score: 96/100pts Individual judges' scores: Jim Budd 96 Chris Kissack 95 Laure Patry 96

£13.99 Alliance

If Saumur-Champigny's vineyards were ever classified, Les Poyeux would likely be a grand cru. Facing southwest, this 15-hectare vineyard has a special microclimate: warmer and drier than surrounding parcels. The Bonneaus, who attach importance to site rather than vine age, own 3ha in the middle of Les Poyeux. This wine is aged for a year - 30% in barriques, the rest in stainless steel. It's a bargain at this price!

Jim Budd Ripe, textured fruit and a great structure, which is quite marked by tannins at present but has real potential to age.

Chris Kissack Savoury dried cherry aromas with pepper and truffle. The palate has juicy black cherry fruit of real substance and charm. The structure is firm but the wine has a bright energy that defines it.

Laure Patry Earthy, truffles and blackberries with lots of concentration. Dry tannins with lots of minerality and balanced acidity.

Drink 2017-2025 Alcohol 13%



La Seigneurie, Saumur-Champigny 2014 95 JB 95 CK 95 LP 95

N/A UK www.laseigneurie.net

Alban Foucher took over the 20ha family domaine in 2005 after stages in, among other places, Tasmania, Thailand and as assistant winemaker at Robert Mondavi Winery in Oakville. Until 2005, 90% of the family's wine was sold in bulk to négociants. Foucher has now brought it back to 50%, with the eventual aim of selling it all in bottle. In 2014 he built a practical, modern winery to aid his endeavours. This cuvée is aged in stainless steel and bottled the following September after the vintage.

JB Perfumed and floral - lots of violets - with a lovely soft texture. A very seductive, mid-weight wine with good length.

CK Sweet, concentrated plum and forest fruit aromas. The palate is delicious and confident, showing texture and dried fruit complexity. Sweet and polished with savoury edges and crunchy tannins to finish.

LP Candy floss on the nose, then ripe plums on the palate. Medium bodied with fresh acidity and minerality. Well balanced between structure, acidity and alcohol.

Drink 2016-2025 Alc 13%

Highly Recommended 90-94pts



Domaine St-Vincent, Les Adrialys, Saumur-Champigny 2015 94 JB 92 CK 96 LP 95

N/A UK www.st-vincent.com

Dark and toasty, with primary blackcurrant and black cherry fruit. Medium bodied with good acidity and structure. A vibrant wine with a ripe, tannic, spicy finish; needs time but it is going places. Drink 2016-2027 Alc 14%



Domaine de St-Just, Montée des Roches, Saumur-Champigny 2014 93 JB 91 CK 96 LP 92

£19.50 Christopher Keiller, Raeburn Fine Wines

Blackcurrant and tobacco aromas with smoky fruit. The palate is substantial, pure and full of perfumed black cherry laced with vanilla. Well-structured with a pepper finish and ripe tannins. Drink 2018-2028 Alc 13.5%



Antoine Sanzay, Saumur-Champigny 2014 92 JB 94 CK 90 LP 92

N/A UK antoine-sanzay@wanadoo.fr

Earthy sous bois and farmyard on the nose with deep plum notes. The palate feels pure, balanced and polished, with a harmonious balance of supple texture, fresh acidity and slightly grainy tannins. Has potential but needs time. Drink 2016-2026 Alc 12.5%



Château de Parnay, Clos des Meuniers, Saumur-Champigny 2014 92 JB 90 CK 96 LP 90

N/A UK www.chateaudeparnday.fr

Perfumed, black cherry fruit with vanilla and dark chocolate. The palate is fresh and pure with elegant balance, a savoury backbone and long finish of ripe tannins. Delectable. Drink 2016-2026 Alc 13%



Château de Villeneuve, Le Grand Clos, Saumur-Champigny 2011 92 JB 90 CK 95 LP 90

£25 Beaconsfield Wine Cellar, DBM, D Byrne, Hedonism, The Vineyard (Dorking)

Toasted bread and almonds on the nose with hints of tea and black cherries. Macerated dark fruit with dried fig fruit character, along with rose and tobacco. Drink 2016-2024 Alc 13%



Domaine de la Paleine, La Maison Cassée, Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame 2014 92 JB 87 CK 96 LP 92

N/A UK www.domaine-paleine.com

Cherry and tea leaf notes with tar and violets. Juicy and meaty palate with classic structure, showing texture and ripe tannins. Elegant with a peppery finish. Drink 2016-2022 Alc 13% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Domaine de Rocheville, Le Page, Saumur-Champigny 2014 92 JB 92 CK 91 LP 92

£9.95–£14.99 Handford Wines, Sommelier Wine Co, Woodwinters

Ripe, dark fruits on the nose with a floral edge. Supple palate that is very elegant, composed and juicy, with lots of substance. Spices and roasted meat follow soft tannins leading to a concentrated finish. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13%



Domaine Filliatreau, Château Fouquet, Saumur 2014 92 JB 94 CK 85 LP 98

£12.75 Yapp Bros

A restrained fruit purée nose with hints of bell pepper and chalky freshness. A lovely, soft texture with silky tannins and elegant acidity. Well-balanced with a great structure making for a delicious wine. **Drink** 2016–2026 **Alc** 12.5%



La Folie Lucé, Encore, Saumur-Champigny 2014 92 JB 95 CK 94 LP 86

N/A UK www.lafolieluce.com

Dark and restrained nose of dried plums with a vanilla lift. Not a heavyweight but has a lot of charm, plenty of ripe red fruit and a very complete and elegant finish. Has the potential to cellar. **Drink** 2016–2026 **Alc** 13%



La Seigneurie, Les Clos de La Seigneurie, Saumur-Champigny 2014 92 JB 89 CK 94 LP 92

N/A UK www.laseigneurie.net

Perfumed blackcurrant and forest floor notes on the nose with a hint of smoke. The palate is more expressive, with raspberry and cherry, a cool and tense structure, and fresh acidity. Lots of energy here. **Drink** 2017–2024 **Alc** 13%

‘Some are still simple and quaffable, but they can also be serious and ageworthy’ Jim Budd



Antoine Sanzay, Les Poyeux, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 97 CK 89 LP 86

£28 (2013) Kitchen Vine

Dark blueberry and cherry fruit with cinnamon and coconut notes. The palate has charming texture with a glossy red fruit character, with vanilla and cream. Refreshing acidity on the finish. Brilliant! **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 12%



Château de Villeneuve, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 88 CK 90 LP 94

£12–£14.10 Butlers Wine Cellar, Champion Wines, Christopher Piper, DBM, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey

Nichols, Highbury Vintners, Noel Young, St John Wines
Earthy aromas, but pure. The palate is supple with a juicy weight of fruit, floral perfume and dry tannins. Balanced by its acidity, leading to a crunchy finish. **Drink** 2018–2024 **Alc** 12.5%



Château Yvonne, La Folie, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 90 CK 93 LP 91

N/A UK +33 (0)2 41 67 41 29

Blueberries on the nose and a fine purity and texture on the palate, with lightly grippy tannins and a bright acid backbone. Smoky and earthy notes with good concentration and a firm finish. **Drink** 2017–2025 **Alc** 12.5%



Clos des Cordeliers, Prestige, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 89 CK 90 LP 93

£19.25 (2013) Berry Bros & Rudd, Fields Morris & Verdin, Woodwinters

Cherries and blackberries on the nose with a gentle texture and supple palate. Shows structure and potential with lightly grainy tannins and balanced acidity. Cool fruit with grip on the finish. **Drink** 2018–2022 **Alc** 12.5%



Domaine de l'Enchantoir, Terres Pourpres, Saumur 2011 91 JB 92 CK 92 LP 89

£12.20 Grainger Fine Wines

Black cherries and cassis with violet perfume and a leafy lift. A light-footed palate, juicy and evolving, with toasted almond and black tea. Elegant and composed with a long finish of ripe tannins. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Domaine Dubois, Cuvée d'Automne, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 91 CK 89 LP 92

N/A UK www.domaine-christelle-dubois.fr

Pencil shaving notes with a rustic and earthy character. Good concentration of black fruit on the palate with crunchy tannins and fine grip. Well-balanced with a medium to full body. **Drink** 2017–2024 **Alc** 12.5%



Domaines des Ormes, Saumur 2014 91 JB 84 CK 94 LP 95

N/A UK www.cavedesaumur.com

Beautifully pure dark cherry fruit aromas leading to a well-structured palate with high tannins and acidity. A little drying on the liquorice and spice finish. A serious, classic style for Saumur. **Drink** 2016–2021 **Alc** 13% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



La Folie Lucé, Autrement, Saumur-Champigny 2011 91 JB 90 CK 91 LP 91

N/A UK www.lafolieuce.com

Leather and black truffle on the nose with tobacco nuances. The palate is rich and broad with an evolved texture, liquorice and toasted almond notes, along with a backbone of spicy, peppery tannins. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 13.6%



Le Petit St-Vincent, Les Clos Lyzières, Saumur-Champigny 2014 91 JB 88 CK 90 LP 95

POA [Vinetrail](http://Vinetrail.com)

Pure blackcurrant and vanilla aromas with a floral edge. Elegant and charming on the palate, structured with brightness of acidity and confident in character. Attractive and interesting with some typicity. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 13%



Cave de Saumur, Les Nivières, Saumur 2014 90 JB 90 CK 89 LP 90

£8.99 [Waitrose](http://Waitrose.com)

Cherry skin and thyme on the nose with a hint of violet. Cool and pure on the palate with ripe tannins and a fine balance between structure and acidity, finishing with a spicy edge. Juicy and vivacious. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 12.5%



Château Yvonne, Saumur-Champigny 2014 90 JB 90 CK 95 LP 86

POA [ow.Loeb & Co](http://ow.Loeb.com)

Dark and ripe fruits that are perfumed with vanilla and a minty freshness. Creamy fruit on the palate, fresh and savoury, but with textural confidence. Structured, with firm but ripe tannins and firm acidity. **Drink** 2017-2026 **Alc** 12.5%

'The wines in this tasting all offer excellent value for money' **Laure Patry**



Domaine de Nerleux, Clos des Châtains, Saumur-Champigny 2014 90 JB 88 CK 89 LP 93

N/A UK www.nerleux.fr

Dark fruit aromas then leathery and elegant on the palate. Slightly caramelised notes with grippy tannins and good concentration. Primary, savoury and structured with a liquorice finish. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13.5%



Domaine Langlois-Château, Vieilles Vignes, Saumur-Champigny 2013 90 JB 90 CK 85 LP 94

£15.34-£21.50 (2011) [Hangingditch](http://Hangingditch.com), [Hennings](http://Hennings.com), [Le Vignoble](http://LeVignoble.com)

Rose and undergrowth aromas with a dressing of coconut. Sweet texture on the palate with a good structure and impressive balance for 2013. Marked acidity to finish but the tannins are well integrated. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Domaine Langlois-Château, Saumur 2012 90 JB 91 CK 89 LP 90

£11.50 [Cambridge Wine Merchants](http://CambridgeWineMerchants.com), [D'Arcy Wine Merchants](http://DArcyWineMerchants.com), [Fareham Wine Cellar](http://FarehamWineCellar.com), [Guildford Wine Co](http://GuildfordWineCo.com), [Hangingditch](http://Hangingditch.com), [Hennings](http://Hennings.com)

Perfumed nose of cherries, blueberries and green pepper; has some leafy Cabernet lift. Light, juicy and supple palate with animal and leather notes plus bitter chocolate. Very classical in style. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Domaine St-Vincent, Les Trézellieres, Saumur-Champigny 2015 90 JB 86 CK 96 LP 89

N/A UK +33 (0)2 41 67 41 29

Dark cherries, meat and liquorice notes on the palate with a leafy texture. Broad and impressive with succulent fruits and a full body. Finishes on spice with confidence and a long tannic grip. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 12.5%

Recommended 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	LR	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Cave de Saumur, Les Plantagenêts, Saumur 2012	89	90	88	89	A nose of plump redcurrants with roasted meat and floral aromas. A bold palate of supple, bitter cranberry and cherry fruits with a grainy backbone.	12.5%	2016-2020	£9.95	Chez Vin, Drinks Etc, Martinez
Château de Chaintres, Sables, Saumur-Champigny 2015	89	84	91	92	Floral nose with a very savoury fruit character. A weighty palate with good structure of acidity and tannin. Feminine and supple with a liquorice finish.	12.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.chaintres.fr
Château du Hureau, Tuffe, Saumur-Champigny 2014	89	87	89	90	Concentrated cherry compote aromas with green pepper notes. A phenolic character and good acidity. Soft texture, good weight and a robust finish.	13%	2016-2022	£11.95	Bancroft, Last Drop Wines, The Salusbury Wine Store, Village Wines

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	LP	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Clotilde et René-Noël Legrand, Terrages, S-Champigny 2011	89	86	93	89	Dark, lightly roasted fruits with hints of spiced bread. Full-bodied palate with leathery and liquorice notes. Tannins quite present but has good balance.	13.5%	2016-2023	N/A UK	www.domaine-legrand.fr
Domaine de Rocheville, Prince, Saumur-Champigny 2014	89	94	88	86	Earthy dried dark fruit aromas. Bright and fresh palate with a savoury structure and lots of grip and charm. Zippy acidity with lots of extraction.	13%	2016-2024	POA	Dreyfus Ashby, Woodwinters
Dom des Roches Neuves, La Marginale, S-Champigny 2013	89	90	86	92	Interesting nose of dark cherry, vanilla and smoke – surprisingly pure for this vintage. Attractive texture with lightly grained tannins. Admirable effort.	12.5%	2016-2021	£32.16	Exel Wines, Les Caves de Pyrène
Dom des Roches Neuves, Mémoires, S-Champigny 2014	89	90	92	85	Blackcurrant compote aroma with a concentrated palate that is nicely balanced by fruit, texture, acidity and tannic grip. Needs time but attractive.	12.5%	2017-2030	£31.67	Les Caves de Pyrène, Millésima
Domaine du Collier, La Ripaille, Saumur 2012	89	89	89	89	A concentrated wine with a crisp, cool, crunchy palate. Perfumed fruits, violets and bright acidity makes for a well-balanced drink; delicious.	12.5%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.domaineducollier.free.fr
Dom la Bonnelière, Tradition, Saumur-Champigny 2015	89	88	91	88	A dusty redcurrant and cranberry nose, and a juicy palate. Light bodied – a pleasant, easy-drinking style – with gentle tannins and some savoury fruit.	12.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.labonneliere.com
Le Petit St-Vincent, Les Poyeux, Saumur-Champigny 2014	89	82	90	94	Sweet and aromatic black cherry fruit that is smoky and fresh. Juicy on the palate with a good balance of acidity and high minerality. Pure and fresh.	13%	2016-2022	POA	Vinetrail
Alliance Loire, Les Villaises, Saumur-Champigny 2014	88	88	88	89	Bright, dark cherry nose. The palate is supple, but with a dark and grainy fruit character. Tannins may need some time to soften but it is well balanced.	12.5%	2017-2024	£10.95	Corney & Barrow
Clos des Cordeliers, Tradition, Saumur-Champigny 2014	88	86	88	89	Dark, dried cherry skins; slightly warm and gamey. Softly textured with a chalky backbone and a herby edge. Finishes a touch bitter with warm spices.	12.5%	2016-2021	£9.50 (2013)	The Wine Society
Dom de Nerleux, Printemps, Saumur-Champigny 2015	88	88	92	85	Blackberries and blackcurrants on the nose. The palate is elegant and supple, with lovely purity of violets and peony. Floral and fresh; a very feminine style.	N/A	2016-2023	N/A UK	www.nerleux.fr
Dom de St-Just, Terres Rouges, Saumur-Champigny 2014	88	86	88	89	Steely fruit on the nose with a lift of red fruit perfume. The palate is full of pomegranate, redcurrant and florals, but still with that steely edge.	13%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.st-just.net
Domaine du Collier, La Charpentrie, Saumur 2012	88	88	87	90	Cherry fruit aroma with a sooty character. Has good texture with freshness on the palate. Displays punch and substance with a cherry fruit finish.	12.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.domaineducollier.free.fr
Château de Brézé, Clos du Tue-Loup, Saumur 2014	87	89	83	89	Charred toasty oak with plum and liquorice aromas. Caramelised fruit palate with marked acidity and vanilla flavours. Might need more time to integrate.	13%	2017-2027	N/A UK	www.chateaubreze.com
Château de Chaintres, VV, Saumur-Champigny 2011	87	82	89	90	Dark pastille fruit with notes of sous-bois. Very straightforward style: lean but polished blackcurrant, toasted cinnamon notes and spiced bread to finish.	12.5%	2016-2023	N/A UK	www.chaintres.fr
Château de Parnay, Le Clos, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	86	89	86	Sweet, seductively perfumed cherry aromas that lead to a crisp palate. A stern style with good weight and texture, though slightly grainy on the finish.	13.5%	2016-2022	£14	EJ Bartholomew
Château de Targé, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	84	87	89	Warm, lightly roasted fruit skins with green pepper notes. The bright palate is meaty and juicy with toasted almonds, soft tannins and a vanilla polish.	N/A	2016-2021	N/A UK	www.chateaudetarge.fr
Domaine Bruno Dubois, Du Coin, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	89	83	89	Dark plum compote joins ripe, soft tannins on an attractively textured palate. There's a bitter chocolate edge that finishes it off nicely.	N/A	2016-2026	N/A UK	www.bruno-dubois.com
Domaine de La Paleine, Saumur 2012	87	88	89	85	Morello cherries with black tea on the nose. Attractive in texture with a full body, refreshing acidity and liquorice notes to finish.	12.5%	2016-2020	£10.70	Tanners
Domaine des Sanzay, Poyeux, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	87	90	85	Cherries and meat on the nose with a hint of smoke. Concentrated with an appealing texture, plenty of redcurrant substance and fresh acidity.	13.5%	2017-2024	N/A UK	www.domaine-sanzay.com
Domaine des Sanzay, VV, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	89	85	86	Sweet, smoky berry fruits on the nose leading to a structured palate. The fine-grained tannic grip adds texture to the supple, warm finish.	13.5%	2016-2029	N/A UK	www.domaine-sanzay.com
Domaine Filiatreau, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	82	88	90	Slightly meaty character on nose with crystalline black cherry fruit. Palate is complex and open with high acidity and crunchy fruit nuances. Needs time.	12.5%	2017-2022	£12.50	Yapp Bros
La Source de Ruault, Sensei, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	95	83	84	Blackcurrant aromas with hints of oatmeal and plum. Velvety and leathery palate shows liquorice and spices plus bright acidity. Potential to age.	13%	2018-2025	N/A UK	www.lasourceduruault.com
Raymond Morin, Saumur-Champigny 2014	87	82	89	89	Roasted tomato note with a supple and juicy dark fruit character on the palate. Soft tannins with moderate concentration and a moreish finish.	12.5%	2016-2023	£12-£13.50	Humble Grape, Le Bon Vin
Château de Brézé, Clos Mazurique, Saumur 2015	86	87	87	85	Violets and redcurrants on the nose with blueberry flavours and a light but refreshing structure. Gently supple with a warm finish. Simple but good.	13%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.chateaubreze.com

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	JB	CK	LP	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Domaine de la Bessière, Clos de la Croix, S-Champigny 2014	86	87	83	87	Dark cherries with a floral edge. The palate has a grainy fruit character with some leafy notes. Very concentrated; tannins a bit harsh at the moment.	13%	2016-2022	N/A UK	www.domainedelabessiere.com
Domaine de la Bessière, XL, Saumur-Champigny 2014	86	86	85	88	Violet perfume with toasted notes; a modern style. Tense and bright on the palate with plenty of sour-fruit acidity but concentrated fruit to balance.	12.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.domainedelabessiere.com
Domaine de la Paleine, Saumur-Champigny 2014	86	88	86	85	Primary dark fruit with a leafy edge. Softly textured with good structure; a cool, fresh style with biting tannins on the finish. Needs more time.	13%	2017-2022	N/A UK	www.domaine-paleine.com
D de l'Enchantoir, Clos du P't Chavannes, Saumur PND 2010	86	82	85	91	Secondary aromas and notes of coconut. Moderate intensity with truffle and sous-bois notes tinged with blackcurrant skins. Well-balanced if a bit evolved.	14%	2016-2017	£23	Grainger Fine Wines
Domaine des Garennes, Sous les Coutures, Saumur 2014	86	85	88	86	Chalky, perfumed raspberry and tobacco aromas. Very elegant on the palate with moderate acidity and an attractive texture. Harmonious and pure.	14%	2016-2024	N/A UK	domaine-des-garennes.fr
Domaine du Fondis, De Bruyn, Saumur-Champigny 2013	86	88	84	85	Rustic nose with spice and tobacco. Moderate intensity with zesty acidity and a sweet texture. Light and easy drinking, yet still has a good structure.	13%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.domainedufondis.net

Commended 83-85pts

■ **Clotilde et René-Noël Legrand, Les Lizières, Saumur-Champigny 2014 89**, 12.5%, 2018-2022, N/A UK www.domaine-legrand.fr ■ **Domaine Bobinet, Amatéis Bobi, Saumur-Champigny 2014 85**, 12%, 2016-2024, £15 (2009) Ewer Wines ■ **Domaine Guiberteau, Les Motelles, Saumur 2013 85**, 11.5%, 2016-2020, £34.95 H2Win, Harrods ■ **Château de Fosse-Sèche, Eolithe, Saumur 2013 84**, 12%, 2016, £23 CVS, Top Selection, Zefino ■ **Domaine Bobinet, Piak, Saumur-Champigny 2015 84**, 12.5%, 2016-2020, N/A UK www.domaine-bobinet.com ■ **Domaine de la Guilloterie, Les Loges, Saumur-Champigny 2014 84**, 13%, 2018-2025, N/A UK www.domainedelaguilloterie.com ■ **Domaine de la Guilloterie, Tradition, Saumur-Champigny 2014**

84, 13%, 2018-2021, £10.14 (2011) Wine in Cornwall ■ **Bruno Dubois, BD, Saumur-Champigny 2014 83**, 12.5%, 2016-2018, N/A UK www.bruno-dubois.com ■ **Domaine de la Renière, Clos de la Renière, Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame 2014 83**, 13%, 2016-2016, N/A UK +33 (0)2 41 52 26 31 ■ **Domaine du Vieux Pressoir, Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame 2011 83**, 14%, 2016-2017, £13.50 The Flying Corkscrew ■ **Domaine Guiberteau, Saumur 2014 83**, 13%, 2017-2020, £20.95 H2Win, Harrods

Fair 76-82pts

■ **Château de Targé, Cuvée Ferry, Saumur-Champigny 2013 82** ■ **Domaine du Vieux Pressoir, Les Silices, Saumur 2014 82** ■ **Clos Cristal, Saumur-Champigny 2013 80**

For full details of UK stockists, see p147

Next month's panel tastings
Austrian Grüner Veltliner
and Spanish Albariño

Expert summary: Jim Budd

With both established and emerging producers doing well, no clear conclusions can be drawn from this tasting – except that these Cabernet Francs represent great value



Jim Budd has been the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire since the Awards' inception in 2004

THIS WAS A very encouraging tasting: overall the quality of these reds from the Saumur region was high, with few poor wines.

It is no surprise that the 2014s dominate the results as it is clearly the best vintage since 2010. Although still very young with some top cuvées yet to be bottled, it is proving a very attractive vintage to drink now with lots of ripe fruit and well-balanced structure and acidity.

Whether 2015 or 2014 is the superior vintage is likely to be debated for some time. Apart from the early-drinking cuvées, most 2015s have yet to be released, so it is impossible to draw firm conclusions from this tasting. However, the 2015 Les Adrialys from Patrick Vadé's Domaine St-Vincent scored very highly. His 2014 cuvée was also very impressive in a tasting last October.

There were also a number of successes for the more mature 2011 vintage, which tends to be overlooked but is currently showing well. Three wines made the Highly Recommended section – those from Villeneuve, l'Enchantoir and La Folie Lucé's Autremont.

Wines from 2013, which many producers (especially the younger ones) describe as the most difficult they have ever experienced, were our least liked. So, it is very

impressive that both the 2012 and 2013 wines from Langlois-Chateau, part of Champagne Bollinger, both scored 90 points. To produce wines of this quality in two difficult vintages is a mark of a very good producer.

It was a brave decision by Eduard Pisani-Ferry of Château de Targé to enter his 2013 Cuvée Ferry, made from old vines. It scored 82. His standard 2014 scored 87. It raises the question of whether it is the best policy to release special cuvées in poor vintages or incorporate everything into making the best possible domaine wine.

It is very encouraging that our two Outstandings – Domaine la Bonnelière's Les Poyeux 2014 and La Seigneurie 2014 – came from two lesser-known but emerging producers. One of the most striking aspects of the results of this tasting is what extraordinary value these and other wines are – less than £15 for the majority of those available in the UK! **D**

'Whether 2015 or 2014 is the superior vintage is likely to be debated for some time'

My top three

Jim Budd

■ **Domaine la Bonnelière, Les Poyeux, Saumur-Champigny 2014** The domaine dates from 1972 and is now run by Anthony and Cédric Bonneau. With sand over limestone, and facing southwest, Les Poyeux is one of the best sites in the appellation. Excellent potential. **96 Drink** 2017-2025

■ **Antoine Sanzay, Samur-Champigny 2014** Now in his 30s, Antoine Sanzay is among the AC's leading producers. His 2014s are excellent – this is the straight domaine wine with rich seductive fruit, long and beautifully balanced. **94 Drink** 2016-2026

■ **Domaine Filliatreau, Château Fouquet, Saumur 2014** One of the most important producers in the region, whose Saumur from vines in Brézé planted on clay limestone can rival Saumur-Champigny. **94 Drink** 2016-2026

My top three

Chris Kissack

■ **Domaine de St-Just, Montée des Roches, Saumur-Champigny 2014** Yves Lambert left finance to take up the secateurs in 1996, but after his passing in 2011 son Arnaud took up the mantle. I'm glad he did. I was particularly impressed by this cuvée, which I ranked my joint-top. **96 Drink** 2018-2028

■ **Château de Villeneuve, Le Grand Clos, Saumur-Champigny 2011** Jean-Pierre Chevalier has terroir and experience on his side, and it shows in this, his top cuvée. It will age well too – I'm still waiting for the 2005 to come around! **95 Drink** 2016-2024

■ **Domaine de Rocheville, Le Page, Saumur-Champigny 2014** Proprietor Philippe Porché only arrived here in 2005, but his wines are classic, pure and ageworthy. This entry-level cuvée proves it. **91 Drink** 2016-2022

My top three

Laure Patry

■ **Le Petit St-Vincent, Les Clos Lyzières, Saumur-Champigny 2014** Dominique Joseph now works this family domaine with low intervention and since 1994 hasn't used any chemical fertiliser. Elegant, precise and easy drinking. **95 Drink** 2016-2025

■ **Chateau Fosse-Sèche, Eolithe, Saumur 2013** The other tasters scored this 80, which brought the average down. This wine was different than the other Saumurs, probably as it is planted on silex and iron oxide rather than the usual tuffeau soil. Well made in a challenging year by a family that created their own vineyard ecosystem. **92 Drink** 2016-2020

■ **Clotilde et René-Noël Legrand, Les Lizières, Saumur-Champigny 2014** Again, other scores of 84 and 82 brought the average down. Not the most complex wine, but good expression for an entry-level wine from this fifth-generation family domaine, which has improved a lot in the past 35 years. **89 Drink** 2018-2022

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

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