

Domaine Roblin, Sancerre



Matthias Roblin's first commercial vintage was 2000 and of that debut the English magazine *Decanter* wrote: "Searing concentration of lime and elderflower fruit with refreshing acids. Long and even with a steely mineral character. Fine." The magazine went on to select Matthias' 2003 Sancerre as the best white table wine to come out of the Loire in 2005 (World Wine Awards, October, 2005). Given the torrid heat

one in which making a fresh wine was all but impossible, this was quite the honor. *Decanter* then profiled Matthias in its September 2006 issue, naming him among five new faces to watch in the Sancerre appellation.

In 2006 his younger brother, Emile, joined him, and now these two work alongside their father, who, with their uncle, used to manage the production at Château de Maimbray until 2010 when those two brothers retired (Château de Maimbray had been imported by Robert Chadderdon, until he closed his doors). The boys represent the fourth generation of Roblins to make wine in Maimbray, a tiny hamlet of Sury-en-Vaux just north of the old walled, hill-top town of Sancerre. The "château" is the Roblin family household (a stately stone building to be sure, but a far cry from the turreted affairs up and down the Médoc Peninsula).

Matthias and Emile's vines grow on the hillsides of Maimbray and Sury-en-Vaux in the northern sector of Sancerre. This zone is known for its *terres blanches* or Kimmeridgian Marls—white soils made of clay and marl and stones on top of Kimmeridgian limestone, and make for pointed, powerful wines that need a couple of years in bottle to show best (and indeed have the potential to age surprisingly well, but almost never are permitted to do so). The brothers have 14 hectares (35 acres) in Sauvignon Blanc and 2.5 (6 acres) in Pinot Noir.

Matthias and Emile have been steadily upgrading their cellar and now are able to work with gravity to move their wine during the fermentation process.

The Wines

- *Sancerre blanc Origine*: This, their classic bottling, stays on its lees until January or February after the harvest, and is bottled roundabout May after a light fining and filtration. The annual production averages 5,800 cases.
- *Sancerre blanc Les Ammonites*: This is the top white, coming from their best parcels of *Terres Blanches*, where shellfish fossils, such as Ammonites, are often found. *Les Ammonites* stays on its lees until bottling in October or November following the harvest, and is never fined or filtered. It is made only in the top years, and the yield is kept between 45 and 55 hectoliters per hectare (the AOC rules permit up to 68 ha/he for Sancerre). Annual production averages 800 cases.
- *Sancerre rouge Origine*: Pinot Noir made and aged in a large upright oak vat. Annual production averages 750 cases.
- *Sancerre rouge Grande Côte de la Vallée*: This is a west-facing slope that had been planted to Pinot Noir at the beginning of the twentieth century. Then phylloxera wiped out the vineyards, and this slope wasn't widely replanted because of the unevenness of the hillside, despite the fact that it was especially well suited to Pinot in Sancerre. The soil here is clay-limestone with silty soil overlying limestone. The Roblins have 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres), and the wine is made entirely in demi-muids (new or one-year-old, depending on the vintage). Annual production averages 165 cases.
- *Sancerre rosé Origine*: Tank fermented Pinot Noir rosé. Nice stuff! Annual production averages 400 cases.