

LOIRE VALLEY WINES

Powerhouse Women Pioneering the Loire Valley's Winemaking Scene

New York City, NY, April 13, 2022 – Women have played a crucial role in France's wine industry since the beginning of time. Though they have hardly received the credit they deserve, they are finally beginning to obtain the recognition they merit in both the vineyard and the cellar.

Historically, women have long been involved in non-mechanized vineyard work, mostly in manual labor like harvesting and grape sorting, or within the secretarial and marketing sectors of the business. However, in the present day, women are finally taking over engineering, oenologist, and wine technician roles. More and more women are taking positions of leadership and management, not as winegrower's wives anymore, but as winegrowers in their own right. Although women remain under-represented in these sectors (only 28% of estate managers in France are women), numerous groups are coming together to advocate for change. One of the most recognized groups is France's *Femmes de Vin*, a national association formed in 2009 that aims to shed light on women winemakers, as well as aid their advancement within the industry.

Beyond organizations are also countless individual women pioneering the wine sector in and paving the way for future generations. For Mother's Day, the [Loire Valley Wines Council](#) celebrates inspiring female role models in the wine industry and pays tribute to women winemakers in the Loire Valley. We are pleased to introduce you to three of them.



- Anne-Charlotte Genet holds the Head of Marketing role at [Domaine Charles Joguet](#) in Chinon. The estate was purchased by her parents in 1985, and since 2006 Anne-Charlotte has managed a growing team of 10 alongside Kevin Fontaine. Today, she handles sales of wine in over 25 countries, as well as the wine tourism and website facets of the business. "It is important that the place of women in the wine world are fully recognized," she says. "Being a woman required me to have an increased wine knowledge and to be more precise and efficient in my daily work than many of my colleagues might have ever needed to, in order to be recognized and respected in my job – and sometimes to work twice as hard," she says.

Despite often having to work more intensely, Anne-Charlotte's core belief is that everyone in the industry merits respect, regardless of gender. "Teams in their entirety should be recognized for the quality of their work, because an estate is not a man or a woman, it is a team of men and women who together shape the vineyard, the wine, magnify it and share it," she says. At Domaine Joguet, Anne-Charlotte reveals that the estate is comprised of 50% men and 50% women. Her advice to women looking to break into the industry? "Be passionate, confident, keep learning, be willing to work harder than others and move forward!"



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- Sylvie Plessis, owner and manager of [Moulin de Chauvigné](#), built her estate alongside her husband back in the early 1990s. The estate is dedicated to a handful of varieties, including Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, and Gamay, spread across the appellations of Coteaux-du-Layon, Anjou, and Savennières. After her husband passed away in 2017, her daughter Manon came to join her. The mother and daughter have been working together since then and are planning to become partners next year.



For Manon, a new generation of winemakers – rather than men versus women – is the driving force behind new energy and dynamism in the wine industry. Sylvie notes that managing an estate, whether male or female, is both psychologically and physically tiring. However, sexism most certainly still exists. “We sometimes receive emails that start with ‘Hello Sir,’” she reveals. “You have to be passionate and determined. I like the fact that it is a very demanding job. I love giving birth to a new vintage. When I introduce myself, I always say that I am a mother of 2 girls, a grandmother, and a mother of 30 vintages.”

- After completing wine studies in Angers, Vanessa Cherruau worked for 10 years in the wine industry in France and abroad. Persuaded with the potential of chenin blanc and the Anjou region, she came back to her roots in the Loire Valley to build her own business. She fell in love with [Château de Plaisance](#), an organic and biodynamic vineyard established on some of the most beautiful terroirs: Chaume, Quarts de Chaume and Savennières.

Both the winemaker and director of the domaine, Vanessa is responsible for the vinification and commercial aspects of the vineyard. She oversees six employees, believes in teamwork, and describes herself as a committed feminist. “For me there is no difference between men and women. Women have as much to contribute as men and are not better at certain things. For me, it’s a question of personality” she says. Vanessa notes that these are the same values she seeks to instill in her daughter. “There is no such thing as a gender-specific profession.”



One of Vanessa’s many dreams is to see more women in the wine industry. “I would like to see more women winemakers. There are remarkable women who are making things happen: Pascaline Lepeltier, Pauline Lair – an urban winemaker... Visibility will come little by little,” she says. Above all, Vanessa notes that becoming a winemaker – whether man or woman – requires much determination. “It’s a complex job, with multiple fields of competence. I am very transparent when [women] ask me for advice. My advice is: go for it! If you are determined, you will succeed. There is nothing to lose.”





About Loire Valley Wines

The Loire Valley, referred to as the Garden of France, is known for its magnificent chateaux, rich history and 4 distinct wine regions - Pays Nantais, Anjou, Saumur, Touraine – each with its own characteristics of grapes, appellations and styles. The wine-growing regions dotting the Loire’s banks feature more than 4,000 wineries, more than 140,000 acres of vineyards, 51 appellations of origin and 7 protected geographical indication, thus making the Loire Valley the third largest French winemaking region. Selling 280 million bottles per year – be they red, rosé or white; still or sparkling; dry or semi-dry, supple or sweet – the Loire Valley is France’s leading producer of white wines and ranks second for rosés. The US is the Loire Valley’s #1 export market both in value (\$87 million) and volume (110,000 hectoliters).

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