



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

CHAMPALOU

Country: France

Region: Loire

Appellation(s): Vouvray

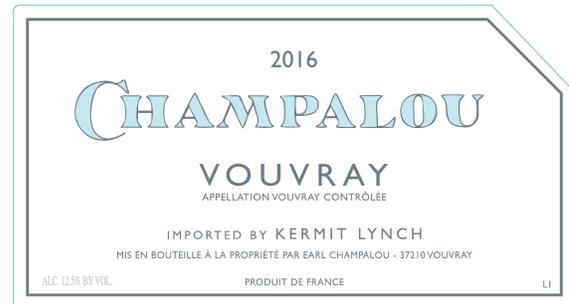
Producer: Catherine & Didier Champalou

Founded: 1984

Annual Production: 10,000 cases

Farming: Sustainable

Website: www.champalou.com



Catherine and Didier Champalou both came from *vigneron* families, yet their mutual sense of independence prompted the couple to brave it on their own right after completing viticultural school in Saumur. Since starting the domaine in 1983, they have not only grown their business, but their label is one of the most highly-acclaimed in the appellation. Vouvray is home to the noble Chenin Blanc, more commonly known as Pineau de la Loire in their part of the world. As widespread as Pineau is, both soil and climate play key roles in the diversity of its incarnations, and a Chenin from California gives one no hint of what the grape is capable of in the right soil.

Farther inland along the Loire, in the region of the Touraine, Vouvray enjoys a warm, continental climate during the summers. Slowly dropping temperatures in autumn make for a long ripening season. Microclimates with high humidity can also bring about the beloved noble rot. The gravel and chalk in the vineyards also play a role absorbing the sun's rays, lending increased ripeness to this part of the Touraine. The Pineau of Vouvray can be *pétillant* (sparkling), *sec* (dry and crisp), *demi-sec* (off-dry) or in a botrytized state called *moelleux*. Catherine and Didier make all four styles.

The Champalou family farms twenty-one hectares of vineyards on clay, limestone, and siliceous soils. They embrace sustainable farming while also integrating the use of the lunar calendar more traditionally associated with organic viticulture. The soils in their vineyards are rich, deep, and aerated through regular plowing. Cover crops are planted in between vineyard rows to help with excess water absorption and to encourage microbiotic activity in the soil. The Champalou house style produces wines of great elegance and tenderness, highly aromatic with impeccable balance. No one comes close to copying their distinct style.

Didier and Catherine's daughter, Céline, has recently joined the domaine after spending her internships in New Zealand, South Africa, Languedoc, Corsica, and Canada. Daughter Virginie lives in London, and is also in the wine business. There is no question that the tradition and quality for which this domaine is known will continue for many years to come.



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CHAMPALOU (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Vouvray Brut Méthode Traditionelle	Chenin Blanc	20 years average	Clay, Limestone	3.5 ha
Vouvray	Chenin Blanc	35 years average	Clay, Limestone	13.5 ha
Vouvray <i>Le Portail</i>	Chenin Blanc	16 years	Clay, Limestone	.35 ha
Vouvray “La Cuvée des Fondraux”	Chenin Blanc	45 years average	Clay, Silex	4 ha
Vouvray “La Moelleuse”	Chenin Blanc	45 years average	Clay, Silex	N/A
Vouvray “Les Tries”	Chenin Blanc	45 years average	Clay, Silex	N/A

* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- All grapes harvested by hand
- Slow fermentation with indigenous yeasts only
- Malolactic fermentation occurs naturally depending on the vintage

Vouvray Brut “Méthode Traditionelle”:

The grapes for the Vouvray Brut are picked at maturity, and early in the morning to best respect the quality of the fruit. The must is then fermented in stainless steel and the wine is raised on fine lees before bottling. A second natural fermentation takes place once the wine is in bottle that gives its effervescence. The bottles are aged *sur lattes* for two years before disgorgement. After disgorgement the wines age for six to eight weeks. Dosage varies from vintage to vintage with a maximum residual sugar of about 3 grams. The Vouvray Brut “Méthode Traditionelle” is a blending of three different vintages per cuvée.

Vouvray:

Harvest occurs early in the morning and the fruit is then immediately pressed. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel *cuves*. A low temperature is maintained while the wine is aged on fine lees in *cuve* for eleven months until bottling in September.

Vouvray *Le Portail*:

The Portail is the parcel of vines located between the gate to the Champalou’s property and their winery, on top of the caves that house the wines. Grapes are picked by hand and pressed immediately. The juice is then vinified in 500 L wooden barrels. After fermentation, the wine sits on its lees for eighteen months in barrel with regular stirring before bottling.



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CHAMPALOU (continued)

Vouvray “La Cuvée des Fondraux” :

Like the Vouvray, harvest happens early in the morning for the Fondraux and the grapes are immediately pressed. The juice is then transferred into 500-L wooden barrels for a slow fermentation. The finished wine has 16 g/L of residual sugar. Each vintage, the balance and residual sugar is determined by tasting. When the right balance is achieved, the wine is chilled to stop fermentation. The wine is aged in the same vessel on its lees for eleven months before bottling.

Vouvray “La Moelleuse”:

Grapes are sorted by hand in order to best select botrytized berries and the ones with the largest concentration of sugar from raisining (*passerillage*). The level of botrytis in the grapes used to make this wine depends on the vintage. The 2015 vintage has 63 g/L of residual sugar.

Vouvray “Les Tries”:

The fruit is sorted, grape by grape, to find the best and most concentrated grapes. Les Tries is only produced in years in which noble rot fully develops. In the last twenty years, only 5 vintages have been produced: 1996, 1997, 2003, 2009, and 2015.

MISCELLANEA

The Champalou’s dry and off-dry Vouvrais have become among the most frequently seen on the American restaurant list, and no wonder, given both their phenomenal quality:price rapport and their style.

David Schildknecht, *The Wine Advocate*