M & S Bouchet

Country: **France**  
Region: **Loire**  
Appellation: **Saumur** | but uses Vin de France  
Producer: **Domaine M. & S. Bouchet**  
Founded: **Founded**  
Annual Production: **2000 cases**  
Farming: **Biodynamic**  
Website: 

From 1990, Matthieu and Sylvanie Bouchet took over the 6 ha family winery located at the place called La Salle. Matthieu’s father, François Bouchet, was the French pioneer in biodynamics and his winery was converted into a biodynamic certified domaine in 1962. Matthieu and Sylvanie chose to follow in his father’s footsteps and continue to farm the same. Clay-limestone soils. Wines are aged in oak barrels in a tuffeau cellar (this freestone was also used to build Les Châteaux de la Loire).

The Loire Valley is perhaps one of the most underrated and unexplored (by most Americans) wine producing regions in France. So often eclipsed by the bombast of Bordeaux, Burgundy, and the Rhone, if it is known at all, the Loire tends to be known for its famous Sauvignon Blanc from Sancerre. Yet the region, which is the largest white wine producing region in France, and the third largest winegrowing appellation (AOC) in the country, also produces many excellent red wines, chiefly from Cabernet Franc.

The most dominating feature of the Loire Valley must be the river itself, France's longest and the last major river in Europe to remain un-dammed. The river cuts deep through dozens of different geologies spanning millions of years, from limestone and travertine to schist and granite, giving rise to many varied growing regions that spread outwards from the backbone of the river like shelf mushrooms on a tree.

About halfway along the Loire's meandering march to the sea lies the town of Saumur, which lends its name to the large AOC appellation that spreads southwards from the town away from the river. The town (and indeed, many of its wineries) is build atop what is known locally as tuffeau, a calcareous rock similar to limestone (but more porous) which provides excellent drainage for vines and excellent caves which the locals use for storing their wine, much of which is a sparkling wine made from Chenin Blanc that requires extended bottle aging similar to Champagne.

One of the other salient features of modern Loire winegrowing involves the unusually high proportion of winemakers using organic and biodynamic winegrowing methods. And one of the two men chiefly responsible for that was a man named François Bouchet, who up until his recent death.
M & S Bouchet (continued)

was France's leading Biodynamic viticulture and winemaking consultant. Bouchet, who wrote what many consider to be the first real how-to guide to Biodynamic winemaking, consulted for biodynamic wineries all over Europe as well as some of the top producers in France, such as Domaine Leflaive, Domaine Leroy, and Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. When he wasn’t flying about helping winemakers remember how many times to stir their silica solution in each direction, he was at home making wine with his son Mathieu at their tiny Domaine de Chateau Gaillard.

The estate consists of only about 14.8 acres (6 ha) of vines, which are farmed, as one might imagine, according to the strictest principles of Biodynamics, which involve, among other things, the complete absence of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or additives of any kind. The estate's vines, which are some of the oldest in the region (some more than 80 years old) produce naturally low yields, which means that the estate produces only about 2000 cases of wine each year, only about 100 of which make it into the United States.

Mathieu Bouchet continues to run the estate just as it always has been. According to the dictates of Biodynamics, the wines are never racked, fined, or filtered before they are bottled. Bouchet continues to age the wines for several years only in large neutral oak casks, resulting in very little oak influence in the wines. Since the 2008 vintage, the wines are labeled “Vin de France”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wine</th>
<th>Blend</th>
<th>Vine Age</th>
<th>Soil Type</th>
<th>Vineyard Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blanc de Chenin</td>
<td>100% Chenin Blanc</td>
<td>40 – 80+ year vines</td>
<td>Clay, limestone</td>
<td>5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sylph” 2009 &amp; 2010</td>
<td>100% Cabernet Franc</td>
<td>40 – 80+ year vines</td>
<td>Clay, limestone</td>
<td>5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fleur Bleue” 2011 &amp; 2012</td>
<td>100% Grolleau</td>
<td>40 – 80+ year vines</td>
<td>Clay, limestone</td>
<td>5 ha</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

Blanc de Chenin 2012

Chenin Blanc

While Matthieu & Sylavanie Bouchet were moving away from the current style of Anjous, he had repeated failures with the AOC. So they decided once and for all to make only wines from France (Vin de France), losing the right to mention the name of the Domaine (the term Chateau is forbidden in this category of wine). Thus, the name Domaine Chateau de Gaillard has been retired, and M & S Bouchet was born. Their latest dry white is simply called “Blanc de Chenin”.

The robe is an amazing pink gold, the nose is intense, yellow fruits (peach, mango), marzipan and honey. The palate is round, fresh, invigorating, with a rather dense material, enlivened by a very light beading. The aromatic reminiscent of a ripe chenin or overripe in some of the vintage, but the wine is dry, set by fine acidity. You will find in the bitter finish the signature of chenin, with a nice chewy taste evoking the clay-limestone soils.

This wine can be drunk today with a seafood or poulet sauté, or couscous, but it should last and become more complex in the coming 5-10 years.

“Sylph” 2010

Cabernet Franc

Cellar at 16°-18°C - Cellar for up to 20 years
Bottled at 49260 - Montreuil-Bellay
The 2010 vintage is more cut out for the cellaring. Decanting of 2.3 hours for an opening in 2014! With the AOC creating too much red tape, Matthew and Sylvania Bouchet have now come out with this wine as Vin de France. A beautiful red robe! Little known area because its production is confidential and Matthew prefers to work in his vineyard rather than handing out samples and press kits.
A quality / price indisputable.

Notes 1 (Gault & Millau): Domaine Bouchet M + S - "Le Sylph" 2011 - 16/20 An elegant wine that combines the fruity, concentration , complexity. This wine shows notes of plum, red fruit, cocoa. And fleshy mouth has a fine tannin structure.
M & S Bouchet (continued)

“Fleur Bleue” 2009 | 2010

100% Grolleau, a red grape grown widely in the Loire Valley and most often used to make rosé, made by a pioneering biodynamic producer (Matthieu & Sylvanie Bouchet) in the Saumur region. This is a very expressive wine with a fresh, firm body; it has aromas and flavors of pepper, spices, gooseberries, and black cherries.

Notes 1: M&S Bouchet "Fleur Bleue" Grolleau 2011 ($28) One of the best new discoveries in the area has been the Biodynamic wines of M&S Bouchet. While their Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc are delicious and varietally perfect, we feel that their Grolleau is the most important to try. Many Grolleau wines are thin and wild, few have substance and depth, finding one that does is worth celebrating.