

Dom de la Chevalerie, Chevalerie 2006 Bourgueil

6 Oct 2009 by Jancis Robinson

From €8.50, £14.60 and \$21.99

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I love Cabernet Franc. When it's good it has a vivacious perfume, a luscious transparency and real purity and sheen – not characteristics often associated with its progeny (with Sauvignon Blanc), the much better-known and more widely planted Cabernet Sauvignon.

The finest Cabernet Francs I have enjoyed – apart from St-Émilion's famous Château Cheval Blanc, which is made from Cabernet Franc with Merlot – have been from the Loire Valley, especially from the appellations Chinon and Bourgueil in the Touraine (see [World Atlas of Wine map](#)).

On purple pages we have been discussing Cabernet Franc recently, not least because of Julia's report on [Project Cabernet Franc](#), whereby Kiwi Master of Wine Sam Harrop has been working with Loire growers to encourage grapes and wines with a bit more ripeness. Loire specialist and author Jacqueline Friedrich, who is currently updating her invaluable book on the subject, champions those producers who, she thinks, were already making wines that were quite ripe enough.

One of the producers highly recommended in Friedrich's 1996 book, and also involved in Project Cabernet Franc, is Domaine de la Chevalerie of Restigné, where Stéphanie, Emmanuel and Pierre Caslot represent the fourteenth and thirteenth generations in charge of these vineyards. They have been experimenting with biodynamics and should be certified organic from the 2009 vintage.

I was very impressed by this earlier offering **Dom de la Chevalerie, Chevalerie 2006 Bourgueil**. This is the Caslots' most serious bottling, made from 70-year-old Cabernet Franc vines grown on south-west-facing slopes of clay and sand over limestone, but it is already a joy to drink with that haunting scent of Cabernet Franc (which reminds me of pencil shavings, oddly enough) and yet masses of fleshy fruit and attractive freshness and structure in the same way that a ripe Tuscan Sangiovese has. This is a wine for food and has a friendly 13% alcohol. One of the Loire's great charms for me is that alcohol levels are generally relatively modest.

Look out for my article on lower alcohol wines this Saturday. Look out too for tomorrow's substantial report on [100 of the more interesting current offerings from Chile](#), among which are several varietal Cabernet Francs, including one standout.

The bottling called, rather confusingly, Chevalerie is Dom de la Chevalerie's top bottling, or at least its longest-term offering, but the Bretèche bottling is also very attractive. I have not tasted their Galichets, nor the Busardières, from 60-year-old vines, but would like to. The rather cheaper Peu Muleau is for earlier drinking. On the basis of what I have tasted, I would recommend any wine from this property as an introduction to one of the world's absurdly under-appreciated wine styles, at a very reasonable price.

Find out (a little) more about this domaine at www.domainedelachevalerie.fr

UK importers are Berry Bros and Caves de Pyrène with K&L in the US. Wine-searcher.com reveals a range of stockists in France and Germany too.

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