

## Loire Sauvignon

At last there has been some warmth in the March sunshine sufficient to see the first of the brimstone flowers in the hedgerows. It's the time of the year I look forward to a change in diet away from the heavier meals of the long dark winter days. The daffodils and forsythia make me think of a fresh flowery wine, and nothing personifies this more than Sauvignon Blanc.

The Sauvignon originated in Bordeaux then migrated north to the Loire Valley where it became established for its fresh aromatic style of young plants, fresh flowers, and mineral complexity. A bottle of Sancerre bursts with sapid aromas of asparagus, cucumber and gooseberries. Pouilly Fume is more mineral with a taste of nettles and gunflint from the soil of the terroir. These are the two best known wines of the region.

Look a bit closer and there are many other gems that are less known and hence command a far lower price. Quincy is a truly delightful Sauvignon from the tributary Cher and Auron, just west of Sancerre. In between is Menetou Salon with a delicious grassy style. Further west is Valencay which has a racy zesty flavour softened with a touch of Chardonnay in the cuvee.

The best value is undoubtedly from Touraine on the Loire between Tours and Blois. Here the style is of fresh green apples with a steely character that bursts with freshness. This word epitomises all these wines and hence for me they are the perfect ones for spring drinking.

This fresh style is perfect for a wide range of foods that will start to appear in seasonal markets. Think of asparagus, spring cabbage, rhubarb, spring lamb and young cheeses. In the Loire the speciality is goats' cheese with Sancerre, so do try some Welsh Goats' cheese such as Talley from Kid Me Not and the range from Cothi Valley Goats, or the firmer style from Merlin. The mild astringency of the cheese is the perfect partner for Sauvignon, served with a fresh salad as a starter, grilled with a warm salad for a main course, or even served as a cheese course after some delicious new season's Welsh lamb.

Sauvignon de Touraine, Domaine Prevote £5.99

Sauvignon de Touraine Joel Delaunay £6.49

Quincy Jean Charles Borgnat £7.99

Valencay Clos du Chateau £7.49