

## SNOW on WINE

# Hooray Hooray for Vouvray

September 2020  
Dr. Jeff Snow

Lazy hot days on our beach, my summer spot since 1948, bring back many memories. A delicious bottle of Vouvray brought to the beach by Christy Snow triggered a chain of memories. In the early 1980's Julie and I often enjoyed a bottle of Vouvray in a Spokane restaurant, and Chenin Blanc from Chateau Ste Michelle and Latah Creek Winery were widely available. But recently it seems too long between glasses of Vouvray and Washington Chenin. Chenin Blanc, a grape once common in Washington State, is the white grape of Vouvray in the middle Loire Valley of France. Those Vouvrais and much of the Washington Chenin Blanc we drank in the 80's were off-dry or sweet. Preferring dry wines, we foolishly assumed all Chenin was sweet and kind of lost interest in it. Then in Fall of 1999, on a weeklong self-guided bicycle tour of the famous Chateaux of the Loire Valley, Vouvray reintroduced itself to us – in its home with its native food. We sucked down many glasses with dinners of roasted pigeon, grilled quail, and poached fish. We discovered that Vouvray style varies from dry table wine through all degrees of sweetness up to botrytis affected late harvest dessert wine (as in Quarts de Chaume) with sparkling wine (called Cremant de Loire) as well. Nice crisp wines with plenty of acid, flavors of apples, pears, straw and honey, and supported by firm minerality. And we toasted our memorable arrival back in Paris with a sparkling Cremant de Loire.

We returned to the USA with a much-improved opinion of Chenin Blanc in general and Vouvray in particular. North Berkley Importers provided some nice Vouvrais for our cellar, but we saw it less and less on restaurant wine lists. Sadly, Jancis Robinson writes "Chenin Blanc's influence in France is declining." (1) Since 1957 plantings have decreased by about half. So also in Washington.

Latah Creek winery 2019 Chenin Blanc, Arete vineyard, is a special edition to commemorate Mike Conway's 1982 Chenin Blanc -- a Best of Show award winner in the first wine competition they entered. Mike says "...Chenin Blanc was our second production item behind only Johannesburg Riesling..." but "...Unfortunately, the grape grew out-of-favor and nearly all vines were replanted with more popular varieties. Fortunately, one grower has left his vineyard intact and we've been able to use his Chenin Blanc grapes continually..."(2) Latah Creek's offering compared well with my memory of the Vouvray recently tasted on the beach. It was just off dry, with nice crisp acid balance, its nose started as pear, then with warming went to tropical fruit notes, even passion fruit which continued on the palate. It finished with the mouth feel of great minerality and lingering fruit.

There are a few other notable Chenin Blancs still bottled in Washington. Chateau Ste Michelle still produces one, as does Cedergreen Cellars, and Marty Clubb at L'Ecole 41 in Walla Walla makes an old vine dry Chenin Blanc which I love. As far as I know no sparkling Chenin Blanc is made in Washington, but Kiona, on Red Mountain, makes a wonderful Chenin Ice wine – I found it a dessert wine to end all desserts. So although this delightful grape is currently a bit out of favor, you can easily bag yourself a fine delicious example at Latah Creek Winery in the Spokane Valley. But do not dally, as total production of 56 cases won't last long.

### References:

- 1) Jancis Robinson, Julia Harding, Jose' Vouillamoz, "Wine Grapes, A complete guide to 1,368 vine varieties, including their origins and flavours", 2012, Harper Collins, pp 236 to 239.
- 2) Latah Creek Wine Cellars, wine fact sheet for: Columbia Valley Chenin Blanc, 2019

## SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU CHUCKLE...

**AND JUST LIKE THAT**  
**HAVING A MASK,  
RUBBER GLOVES,  
DUCT TAPE,  
PLASTIC SHEETING  
AND ROPE IN YOUR  
TRUNK IS OKAY**

**DURING THE MIDDLE  
AGES THEY CELEBRATED  
THE END OF THE PLAGUE  
WITH WINE AND ORGIES  
DOES ANYONE KNOW IF  
THEY HAVE ANYTHING  
LIKE THAT PLANNED  
WHEN THIS ONE ENDS?**  
(ASKING FOR A FRIEND)

**I tried donating blood  
today...NEVER  
AGAIN!!!  
Too many stupid  
questions. Who's  
blood is it? Where did  
you get it from? Why  
is it in a bucket?**



As we end week 2 of the lockdown, I've been thinking about Osama Bin Laden. He was stuck in his house with three wives for five years. I'm beginning to wonder if he called in those Navy Seals himself.

**I'M NO BIRD EXPERT**  
  
**BUT I'M GUESSING  
4 FEMALES AND 1 MALE**

**What if they close  
grocery stores and  
we have to hunt for  
our food?  
I don't even know  
where Little Debbie  
lives 🤔**

**Unemployment  
application  
Job title: Burglar  
Reason for lay-off:  
everyone is home**