

Since my last report on the Loire Valley (“Success in the Loire,” June 15, 2012), I have reviewed approximately 400 wines from the region via blind tastings in *Wine Spectator’s* New York office. Of these, 107—or slightly more than one-quarter—earned outstanding ratings of 90 points or higher on *Wine Spectator’s* 100-point scale. The vast majority of these top performers, however, are late-releases from 2009 and 2010, two superb vintages for the Loire.

The top-scoring wine in this report is the Domaine des Baumard Quarts de Chaume 2009 (96 points, \$83), a late-harvest Chenin Blanc that offers a bold, lush and tropical feel, with creamed papaya and mango notes seamlessly blending with the coconut, green plum, ginger, quince and white peach flavors. It’s the best version yet of this dessert wine, which has a long track record of excellence. Loire aficionados will want to cellar it for two decades.

Other top bottlings in this report include more late-releases from 2009 and 2010, such as the Bernard Baudry Chinon La Croix Boissée 2009 (93, \$39), Château de la Roulerie Coteaux du Layon-Chaume Les Aunis 2010 (93, \$45/500ml), Charles Joguet Chinon Clos de la Dioterie 2009 (93, \$53) and Michel Redde Pouilly-Fumé Les Champs des Billons 2009 (93, \$38). (For more of my top-scoring wines, see the chart on page 93.)

While the late-releases shine, it’s the 2011 vintage that is now dominating the marketplace. There are 211 wines from the 2011 vintage in this report; only 15 earned ratings of 90 points or better. (A free alphabetical list of all wines tasted for this report is available at www.winespectator.com/061513.)

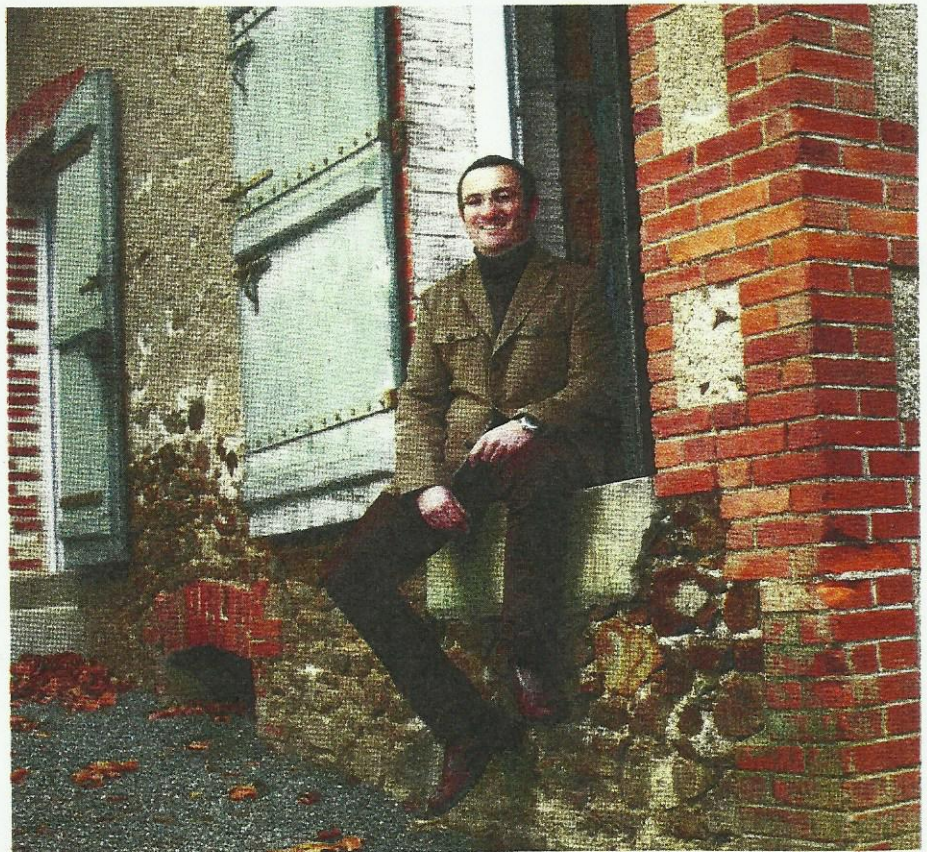
“2011 was a difficult vintage. We had a good spring, but the summer was a disaster. It was cold and wet, and we were lucky to have some warmth at the end of September and early October,” says Philippe Germain of Château de la Roulerie in Anjou.

Hampered by rain and low temperatures throughout the growing season, some producers decided to pick what they could early rather than risk waiting for better weather. As a result, many

2011 whites show underripe notes, and lack There was also little botrytis development in late-harvest Chenin Blanc bottlings.

Some producers, including Germain, decided to gamble on improved picking conditions, and were rewarded with a run of good weather at the tail end of the season. But while their patience paid off in a handful of solid bottlings, the vintage as a whole remains underwhelming. One notable example, the Château de la Roulerie Chenin Blanc Anjou Les Terrasses 2011 (89, \$25), shows good tension and depth, with peach, cardamom and ginger notes.

The central Loire, where Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc are the leading varieties, saw the most consistency in 2011. While cool and wet weather persisted through much of the region, the central Loire



While some Loire Valley vintners rushed to pick early in 2011, Philippe Germain of Château de la Roulerie waited for the weather to improve before harvesting, and as a result produced one of this report’s top values, the Cabernet Franc Anjou 2011.

TOP WINES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
CHÂTEAU DE LA ROULERIE Coteaux du Layon-Chaume Les Aunis 2010	93	\$45 500ml
Unctuous but refined, with persimmon, ginger, quince and mango.		

TOP VALUES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
CHÂTEAU DE LA ROULERIE Cabernet Franc Anjou 2011	88	\$14
A briary frame surrounds the core of black cherry, plum and spice.		