



THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR QUALITY



CHATEAU LA RABOTINE

Alban Roblin, Viticulteur, Sury-en-vaux (Cher)

Château La Rabotine - Alban Roblin • Sancerre

Alban and his wife took control of Château La Rabotine and its vineyards in 2010. What seems like a new wine venture is actually a continuation of an old one. The Roblins have cultivated this land in the northern Sury-en-Vaux sub-region of Sancerre since the 1920s. Alban is the grandson of celebrated vigneron, Georges Roblin, of the former Château de Maimbray. When Georges retired, Alban took over his family's vines, and he and his wife settled in at Château La Rabotine. The terrain of the domaine is a blanket of rocks and stones, exposed gentle hillsides, and old vines (well over 40 years). The region is singular due to its higher altitude (~280m) and the wind that funnels through the valley, acting like a hair dryer to the vines, minimizing problematic rot and disease. This remarkable setting allows Alban to farm organically without sacrificing the fitness of his fruit.

Sancerre Rouge "Cuvée des Dames" Vieilles Vignes 2020

Maybe the only reason there is so little Sancerre Rouge is that Sancerre Blanc rules the world. LOL! Seriously, all of the pieces of the puzzle to make truly fine Pinot Noir exist in Sancerre: cool climate for long, slow ripening; rocky, limestone-clay soils for that essential mineral-laden, cherry-berry fruit character in the glass; and hillside vineyards because that's just the best way to grow grapes. Well, the fact remains, there is precious little Sancerre Rouge to go around. At Château La Rabotine that's just six acres of their 30 total.

Two vineyards contribute to Alban's 2020 Sancerre Rouge "Cuvée des Dames": 60+ year vines in L'Erable and Droux. L'Erable usually makes up the single source for his Rouge, but this year he added a small percentage of the Droux just like he did with his celebrated 2018. In fact, Alban approached both vintages in much the same way. Strict pruning, green fruit and leaf thinning, and timely early picking brought in just about perfect fruit. On arrival at the cellar, the fruit was fully destemmed and closely sorted, then macerated in stainless steel tank for three weeks with manual punching of the cap and pumping over. After maceration and alcoholic fermentation, the wine was racked off into a combination of tank and neutral oak barrels where a natural malolactic fermentation finished the wine in early spring of 2021. From there, Alban let the wine rest for twelve months, bottling in April of 2022. Speaking with Alban, he says the wine has a "clear and limpid red cherry color. The nose is rich and complex with aromas of red fruits, dominated by black currants and a beguiling spice. It is long on the palate where it's velvety grip, fresh acidity and raspberry/plum fruit character are most apparent." Anyone who liked Alban's 2018 will appreciate his 2020 just as much. Only problem is less than 100 cases are destined for the U.S. Come and get it.

