

Château de l'Éperonnière



After years of partnership with RWM, the Tijou family, propriétaires for several generations of the Chateau Soucherie in Beaufort-sur-Layon, decided to sell their property and effectively exchange the larger domaine of Soucherie for the smaller estate just down the road, Chateau de l'Éperonnière, which was also in the family for many generations. Mathieu Tijou, son of Pierre-Yves and Brigitte, established his domaine at Eperonnière and launched his career as independent vigneron with the 2007 vintage. This is a particularly pleasing development for us as we had worked vintage-to-vintage with his father at Soucherie for over twenty-five years, having commenced our relationship in 1982 by importing the 1980 vintage.

Mathieu and his wife, Charlotte, have renovated this spectacular property with impeccable taste, respecting the traditional architecture and, in fact, using the finest artisanal labor to repair one of the wooden ceilings in the chai that dates back to the thirteenth century.

The vineyards are sited on both sides of the Loire and overlook the Layon. Mathieu owns the "Croix Picot" vineyard in the Savennières appellation and the remaining vineyards around the Château are in the Anjou and Coteaux du Layon appellations.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** In organic conversion
- **Treatments:** No herbicide for c. 5 years and movement away from synthetic treatments to copper-sulfate
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Schist/shale, clay, sandstone, flint, and limestone
- **Vines:** Trained in Gobelet and in Guyot and planted at c. 5,000 vines/ha, vines average 15-20 years old.
- **Yields:** Controlled through pruning, debudding, and green harvesting, yields average 75-80 hl/ha.
- **Harvest:** Savennières and Crémant are harvested manually, Rosé is harvested mechanically, usually from September to early October.
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit. (Crémant de Loire vinified off-site from estate fruit)

Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Savennières ferments with indigenous yeasts in neutral barriques. Other wines ferment with selected yeasts in stainless-steel tanks.
- **Extraction:** White wines see bâtonnage only to counter reduction.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** Chaptalization when necessary
- **Pressing:** Whole-cluster direct pneumatic pressing for all wines
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Blocked by wines' naturally high acidities



Aging:

- **Élevage:** Savennières spends c. 12 months in neutral barriques. Other wines age 6 months in stainless-steel tanks.
- **Lees:** Wines are racked following alcoholic fermentation and remain on their fine lees until assemblage prior to bottling. Crémant remains *sur lattes* c. 36 months.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are fined with bentonite and see plate filtration.
- **Sulfur:** Applied at rackings and at bottling