

Domaine du Nozay



Sancerre's sprawl encompasses nearly 3,000 ha of vines, but the traditional heart of the appellation is a central core flanked by the towns of Sancerre, Bué, and Chavignol. In contrast, the 15 ha Domaine du Nozay lies at the northernmost extreme of the appellation—a contiguous and steep bowl of vineyards just outside the town of Sainte-Gemme-en-Sancerrois. Back in 1971, the ambitious Philippe de Benoist purchased the stunning 17th-century Château du Nozay and began planting vines around the property, and today his son Cyril runs the operation with boundless enthusiasm and effusive intelligence. In fact, Cyril is a nephew of the legendary Aubert de Villaine of Domaine de la Romanée Conti (his mother Marie-Hélène is Aubert's sister), so perhaps that visionary spirit runs in his bloodstream.

In terms of terroir, the micro-climate of Sainte-Gemme is a far cry from Bué and Chavignol. Whereas the latter two villages tend to produce Sancerre of ample fruit, clear varietal typicity, and intense concentration, Sainte-Gemme's wines are a bit more feistily mineral-driven, a bit more marked by earth—it is perhaps no accident that Sainte-Gemme is the closest village to Chablis in terms of physical proximity. In an appellation in which it is so easy—and, perhaps, tempting—to produce wine with a minimum of effort and rely on its famous name to sell it, Cyril's restless pursuit of his terroir's deepest possible expression is admirable.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Certified Biodynamic by Demeter since 2017, certified organic since 2008, and practicing organic for c. 20 years
- **Treatments:** Copper sulfate and biodynamic preparations
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to promote soil health, with much of it done by horse
- **Soils:** Kimmeridgian limestone marls, locally known as Terres Blanches
- **Vines:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 7,000-8,800 vines/ha. Average vine age is 50 years.
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe winter pruning and debudding, c. 50 hl/ha.
- **Harvest:** All grapes destined for the Château and Clos cuvées are hand harvested; some other fruit is machine harvested
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Wines ferment spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks, terra cotta jars, and wood barrels, depending on cuvée.
- **Extraction:** Bâtonnage employed only to counter reduction
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic, whole-cluster direct pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Occurs spontaneously in tank in spring

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Wines spend 10-12 months in stainless-steel tanks, terra cotta jars, and wood barrels, depending on cuvée.
- **Lees:** Wines remain on their fine lees until assemblage prior to bottling.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are unfinned and unfiltered
- **Sulfur:** Applied only at bottling, 30-40 mg/l total sulfur.