

Lucien Crochet



On my first visit to Bué in 1981 to introduce myself to Lucien Crochet, I waded through the various signs for other Crochet-named domaines in the tiny village before finding the plaque for “Lucien” on a little rise above the church in the town’s main square. Lucien was gracious, the wines were lip-smackingly delicious, and I ordered 300 bottles of his Sancerre from the Clos du Chêne Marchand vineyard. Over the course of 30 years (I write this in January, 2012), that small initial purchase of a barrel of Sancerre has grown to many thousands of bottles purchased from Lucien Crochet and his son, Gilles, to such an extent that this is now our largest supplier.

It was Lucien’s marriage to the daughter of Lucien Picard and the subsequent fusion of the domaines of Lucien Picard and André Crochet that created the Domaine Lucien Crochet. Monsieur Picard was one of the very first growers in the Sancerre district to begin bottling his wines and selling them primarily to restaurants in Paris. Lucien Crochet expanded the work of his father-in-law and, over a thirty year period, also expanded the domaine so that it now encompasses 38 hectares of vineyards, almost all located in the village of Bué, with smaller holdings in the neighboring Vinon and Crézancy. The domaine now stands in proud contrast to the industrial operations pushing their vines to the absolute limit to quench the insatiable American thirst for the wines of this appellation. The wines of Lucien Crochet offer a crystal clear prism to the region’s terroir and display the heights that Sancerre can reach.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Lutte Raisonnée
- **Treatments:** Synthetic treatments only when necessary, no herbicide
- **Ploughing:** Annual hoeing to promote soil health
- **Soils:** A combination of Oxfordian limestone-clays (Griottes), Kimmeridgian limestone-gravels (Terres Blanches), and Kimmeridgian limestone-gravels (Caillottes)
- **Vines:** Trained in single Guyot and planted at 7,000-8,800 vines/ha. Average vine age is 25 years.
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe winter pruning, debudding, and green harvesting. 55-65 hl/ha.
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, in mid-late September
- **Purchasing:** Some purchasing from local growers on basic cuvées, from c. 7 ha of vines throughout Sancerre



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Wines ferment with selected yeasts in stainless-steel tanks. Red wines see total destemming and a weeklong cold soak before fermentation.
- **Extraction:** A combination of punchdowns and pumpovers for red wines, no bâtonnage for white wines
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing for reds, pneumatic, whole-cluster direct pressing for whites
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Occurs spontaneously in spring for reds, blocked in whites and rosés to preserve freshness

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Wines age in stainless-steel tanks, foudres, demi-muids, or barriques, depending on cuvée. Most white wines spend c. 12 months aging, with 18 months for reds, and 6 months for the domaine’s rosé.
- **Lees:** 6-8 months for basic wines, 12 months for single parcel wines
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are fined with diatomaceous earth or bentonite and are unfiltered.
- **Sulfur:** Applied at harvest, after fermentation, and at bottling; 25-40 mg/l total sulfur, with 25 mg/l free at bottling.