

Château du Petit Thouars



Built in the early 1500's for a wealthy family from the town of Thouars, the Château du Petit Thouars is a 150-ha estate run today by Sébastien du Petit Thouars, the twelfth generation to dwell here since his ancestor George purchased the property in 1636. Though records and physical evidence exist of wine production on the property centuries ago, it wasn't until the late 1970's that the enterprise was revived—this time, by Sébastien's father, who gradually planted 15 ha of Cabernet Franc (plus a little Chenin Blanc) immediately behind the house itself. The vineyards and cellar are managed by Michel Pinard, a born-and-bred Chinonnais who worked for many years as the right-hand-man of Charles Joguet—one of the appellation's most famous and respected vigneron.

The Château is located in the commune of Saint-Germain-sur-Vienne, in the southwest part of the Chinon appellation, along the south bank of the Vienne River. In contrast to the sandy soils that predominate further east in the appellation, the vineyards around Petit Thouars are on limestone-clay, much like those of Saumur-Champigny, immediately to the town's west. Saint-Germain-sur-Vienne did not belong to the Chinon AOC until 2015, as growers in Saint Germain decided to opt out upon the appellation's creation in 1937, betting on the "Touraine" designation instead—probably the "wrong" call in hindsight, but understandable given Touraine's broader name recognition at the time. In any event, the commune successfully lobbied for inclusion in the Chinon appellation after Touraine's AOC laws changed in 2012 to forbid 100%-Cabernet-Franc wines, and thus from 2015 on Château du Petit Thouars's wines are labeled as Chinon rather than Touraine.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** In Organic Conversion
- **Treatments:** Copper sulfate, with synthetic treatments used as a last resort only when a crop is on the line
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Limestone-clay
- **Vines:** Trained in Guyot and planted from 1978-1988 and in 2010
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe winter pruning and debudding with a green harvest if necessary
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual and into small cagettes, usually from mid-September to early October
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit

Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** White wines ferment spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks. After total destemming and a 1-2 day cold soak, red wines ferment spontaneously in open-top tronconic oak foudres and stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaison lasts 10-30 days, depending on vintage and cuvée.
- **Extraction:** Red wines see daily pumpovers during cuvaison
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Blocked by naturally high acidities for white wines; spontaneous, following alcoholic fermentation for red wines



Aging:

- **Élevage:** Chinon blanc spends 18 months in 225-l neutral oak barrels purchased from Château Guiraud in Sauternes. Les Georges spends 6 months in stainless-steel tanks. L'Épée spends 18 months in stainless-steel tanks and neutral 225-l oak barrels. L'Amiral spends 24-48 months in neutral 225-l oak barrels.
- **Lees:** Wines remain on their fine lees until assemblage prior to bottling
- **Fining and Filtration:** Diatomaceous earth filtration
- **Sulfur:**