

Vintage report
**Loire
reds 2014**

From the delicate charms of Pinot Noir to the earthy aromatics of Cabernet Franc, the Loire offers a variety of reds to refresh the palate. Jim Budd has picked 30 of his favourites from the successful 2014s, and says that now is the perfect time to rediscover the region's wines.

2014 BEACONS of those September '90s red vintages that often saw a potentially disastrous Loire harvest. In late August producers were looking grim – a cold, damp August made them wonder whether the grapes would ever ripen properly. Philippe Foucaud (Coteaux du Loir), Bouquetin recalls the desperate vigneronne were starting to light candles in their local church, and even considering a pagan sacrifice: sacrificing a favourite chicken.



'The wines have great balance and finesse, as well as that typical Loire freshness'

Jacky Blot, Domaine de la Butte (above)

After two difficult and small vintages, the need for a good vintage was particularly acute in most parts of the Loire, with the exception of the Central-Loire vineyards such as Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, which had escaped the severe frost of 26 and 27 April 2012. This 2012 April frost had hit many hard, with yields frequently down below 30hl/ha. Unfortunately 2013 was equally difficult, with a prolonged cold spring and flowering not starting before mid- to late June; yields were again very low. So the stakes in 2014 were high. Another devastating April frost or poor flowering could well mean bankruptcy.

The growing season started with a very warm March, with more than 200 hours of sunshine leading to a fairly early bud-break, late in March in Anjou, and up to early April further east. Naturally this provoked unease among producers, but the critical period of April and early May was frost-free. ➤



Budd's pick from the Loire reds of 2014

Wines are listed with their appellations, then by value, then alphabetically by producer.

Pinot Noir Sancerre

Vincent Delaporte, Vendanges Entières 93
£23.29 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Sweet fruit with raspberry and cherry character. Very promising but needs time. The French took an earlier harvest of 40hl. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 13%**

Daniel Crochet 92

£19.99 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Lovely example of a red Sancerre with sweetly textured fruit, structure and well-integrated tannins. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 13%**

Benoist du Carro, La Indule 91

£19.99 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Full-bodied Pinot Noir with complexity. Fine Sancerre that appears beautifully. Great black fruits. 100% very good fruit – needs time. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 12.5%**

Vincent Delaporte, Cul de Beaujeu 93

£23.29 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Wonderfully textured black fruit. Length, balance. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 13%**

Domaine Valloiron, Belle Dame 91

£19.99 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Long-structured Sancerre. Producer in heart of Sancerre with emphasis on Pinot Noir. Wonderful. Good black fruit complexity. Length. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 12.5%**

Menetou-Salon

Domaine Pélis, Marquise 91

£19.99 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Only one of the best sources of good Pinot. Mouthfilling texture, density and some length. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 12.5%**

Reuilly

Claude Lalouf, Cuvée André 92

£19.99 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Bright, succulent Pinot Noir fruit. Cuvée de Réserve. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 12.5%**

Coteaux du Giennois

Joseph Nézet, Les Champs de Choumou 93

£23.29 (2012) Lea & Sandeman
Barrel sample. Blend of Pinot Noir and Cabernet with attractive soft, silky texture as well as some structure and length. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 12.5%**

Vincent Delaporte, Cul de Beaujeu 93

£23.29 (2012) Lea & Sandeman

Barrel sample. Wonderfully textured black

fruits. Length, balance. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 13%**