The Loire Valley
~ One of France’s most beautiful wine regions ~
But sadly... Loire wines simply get no respect...

- Off all the many wonderful wines that are made in the Loire Valley, most of them simply don’t fit the typical styles sought by contemporary North American wine consumers....

  - Muscadet...huh??? I do love pinot grigio though!
  - Sauvignon Blanc??? Sure, but from New Zealand!
  - Chenin Blanc... huh??? Let’s have a Chardonnay...
    - Botrylsized Chenin?? We don’t like sweet wines!
  - Cabernet Franc... we prefer Cabernet Sauvignon!

- Maybe we can maybe change some minds tonight....
The Loire is France’s most diverse wine region

• The Loire is France’s longest river...
  • Many tributaries lead to numerous sub-regions with diverse conditions and styles

• 7 Main Official Growing regions...
  • But numerous unique sub-regions
    • varied mix of varieties and styles!

• White, red, dry, sweet, sparkling....
  • All are light & invigorating

• Long known as the “Garden of France”
  • VdF – ‘Vins de la jardin de France’
WHAT IS TERROIR?

CLIMATE
- hot
- cool

SOIL
- other flora
- elevation
- slope

TRADITION

TERRAIN
Early Loire Winemaking

• Winemaking is known to originate with Roman contact in the 1st century AD...
  • By the fall of Rome it was made in all of today’s current wine producing regions

• By the 11th century wine was being traded, via connecting rivers and sea to Paris, Holland & England... BUT...
  • The Loire did not have the benefit of any high status religious or royal patrons at the time...
  • The Dutch became their main distributors

• However, with the growth of French nobility, the Loire became a sort of vacation destination, for wealthy Parisians....

Some PEC parallels here???
Geography and Climate of the Loire Valley

Frost is always a threat due to the northern locale...
  • Varietals therefore need to be cold-hardy...which means lighter body and style wines

• Vintages can vary greatly....
  • In cool years attaining ripeness is a problem
  • Warm years can result in top, late harvest & botrytized, sweet wines

• BUT...... All Loire wines are noted for their bright fresh character and food-affinity
  • MLF and heavy oak influences are generally avoided....
    • Instead, “lees contact” is often encouraged to impart backbone & character

• The Loire is climatically and geographically too diverse to generalize... BUT...
  • 1) East half very continental
  • 2) West very maritime
  • 3) Central – a mixed bag
The Diverse Soils of the Loire...

- Diversity is the key word tonight...
  - Lighter, sandy soils in the west around Nantes
  - Limestone in Sancerre and flint across the river in Pouilly-Fume
  - In the central parts a complex mix of...
    - Gravels, limestone and clays

- Saumur-Champigny...
  - Is located on an elevated plain of ‘Tuffeau’... partly clay, partly limestone, partly sand, partly chalk...
    - Lighter and more crumbly on top... more compressed and dense the deeper you dig...

- This is key to your wine tonight!!!
2016 ‘Le Clos” du Chateau de Parnay
~ Saumur-Champigny ~

• Located along the Loire river on the most reputable tuffeau, clay and limestone terroir of Saumur-Champigny appellation, Chateau de Parnay has been producing outstanding wines for more than two centuries.

• This wine is made from old Cabernet Franc vines planted on tuffeau, clay and limestone soils. The grapes go through three days of pre-fermentation cold maceration; followed by a gentle extraction and maceration with no temperature control for the first 20 days... this encourages warmer fermentation temperatures and as a result extracts more colour and body

• On the nose, beautiful notes of ripe red fruits, associated with the freshness of the soil (mint, spices...) form a very harmonious whole. The palate is full, silky, very balanced, revealing high quality fruit. The length in the mouth is exceptional... and augurs a very good aptitude for aging.

• The 2016 vintage was much like PEC’s 2015
The next dinner would have been on June 24...
~ The Wines of Bordeaux’s Right Bank ~