Fernand Girard

Profile

The Domaine Girard is run by parents, Fernand and Monique, and son, Alain. They come from several generations of winemakers in the tiny village of Chaudoux, located a few miles northwest of the town of Sancerre and directly north of the famous town of Chavignol.

They tend 12 hectares of vines in total, sell some cuvées to négociants and bottle only a portion of their production under their own name. Their La Garenne cuvée comes from a 2.5-hectare vineyard of that name, a plot on a steep east-facing slope with a very rocky limestone soil. The chalky soil brings out the characteristic flinty, mineral and green notes of Sauvignon Blanc. On La Garenne's well-drained, warm slopes, the grapes achieve exceptional ripeness and fruit.

Compared to those in other viticultural regions in France, most of Sancerre's *vignerons* have stricter than usual standards of cellar tidiness and hygiene. It might be the influence of the local goat cheese making, which was traditionally done on a very small, artisanal scale, by people who knew the importance of a pristine environment.

The Girards have an impeccable cuverie and vinify with modern technology: a pneumatic press, stainless-steel vats, a temperature control system during fermentation, and an air-conditioned space for aging in vats and stocking bottles. They counterbalance technology by practicing old-fashioned vineyard work, where herbicides and treatments are used sparingly, and by never adding commercial yeasts to induce fermentation or add flavors.

Their Sancerre is everything one hopes for when thinking about Sancerre: it is bright, lively, pleasantly aromatic, has zippy acidity but low astringency. It is a wonderful food wine that is as versatile as it is easy to drink.