Muscadet with extended lees ageing

A move to recognise communes with specific soil types, aligned with wines that stay on their lees for a minimum of 17 months, has revived this Loire region, says Jim Budd

IN NEARLY 30 years of writing about wine, I've seen Muscadet go from huge popularity and success to crisis and popular scorn by consumers and now a gradual rehabilitation. Although the crus communaux represent a tiny proportion of total production, they are a very important factor in changing the image of Muscadet.

In 1989, Muscadet exported 2.2 million cases – 40% of production. The severe April 1991 frost and consequent price rises coupled with the arrival of wines from outside Europe, in particular Australia, ended its success. At the height of the boom, the area planted with Melon de Bourgogne (the grape used to make Muscadet) rose to about 13,000 hectares. This has now declined by nearly 40% to 8,079ha, which remains a very large area; Sancerre, for instance, is 2,900ha.

Producers’ difficulties have since been exacerbated by a series of serious frosts – notably in 2008, 2012 and 2016 – allied with small crops from 2012 onwards.

Following the overdue tightening up of the sur lie regulations in 1994, there were long discussions over the next quality step up. Eventually it was agreed that long lees ageing associated with particular communes with specific geological type was the way forward. This was recognition of the growing practice by producers over the past 10 to 15 years to give a small proportion of their production extended ageing on lees. Muscadet is usually fermented and aged in large, shallow underground vats, though stainless steel vats are also used. Oak barrels are occasionally used but remain atypical.

The first three crus communaux – Clisson (granite), Gorges (gabbro) and Le Pallet (mix of granite, gneiss and gabbro) were approved in February 2011. Yields are limited to 45hl/ha. Wines from Le Pallet have to be lees aged for a minimum of 17 months, while the minimum for Clisson and Gorges is 24 months. Due to a quirk in the sur lie legislation these wines cannot be labelled sur lie as they are bottled after 30 November in the year following the vintage – the last date for bottling sur lie. Le Pallet cru wines tend to be fruity and forward; Clisson rich, full and flattering; and Gorges tighter and more restrained in character.

Four more crus communaux are due to be recognised: Château-Thébaud, Goullaine, Monnières-St-Fiacre and Mouzillon-Tillières – all in the Sèvre-et-Maine. Hopefully final approval will be given this summer. There are a further three crus in the pipeline – La Haie-Fouassière and Vallet (Sèvre-et-Maine), and Champtoceaux in Muscadet Coteaux du Loire. It is expected to be at least another two years before approval is given. In time there may be two – north and south – in the Côtes de Grandlieu.

Jim Budd is the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire who writes the award-winning Jimsloire.blogspot.co.uk

Muscadet: know your vintages

**2016** Small but fine crop. Severe April frost, widespread summer mildew, heat and drought. Fine autumn with just enough rain.

**2015** Rich wines of good potential, but not yet bottled.

**2014** Wet, cold summer, harvest saved by warm and dry September. Balanced, ageworthy wines. Most should be kept at least another year in bottle.

**2013** Very cold spring led to a late-flowering vintage giving austere wines.

**2012** Small crop from April frost. But very good wines starting to show well with very good potential to age.

**2011** Early vintage starting with a warm dry, spring. Wet from mid-June with serious problems from rot.

**2010** Less rich than 2009 but ageing fast.

**2009** Ripe, rich grapes. Full-bodied wines with ageability.

Muscadet: the facts

**Area under vine (2016)**
- Sèvre-et-Maine 6,400ha, Grandlieu 230ha, Coteaux de la Loire 145ha
- Crus communaux 70ha from three recognised crus; close to 200ha when other crus recognised

**Producers**
- 500, plus two co-ops at Ancenis and Le Pallet

**Annual production**
- Between 400,000hl and 450,000hl, though much less in frost years

**Exports**
- 15% to 20% of production ➢
The results

With 65% of wines scoring 90 points or more, including a perfect score from one of our experts, this tasting confirmed that Muscadet is back. Christelle Guibert reports.

The FACT THAT Decanter’s last Muscadet panel tasting was back in the 1990s says much of the region’s fall from fashion. But this long period in the wilderness may be about to change following this successful panel tasting. With 63 of the 113 wines rated Highly Recommended, eight Outstanding and Three Exceptional – including the first-ever 100-point wine from Decanter’s Loire expert Jim Budd – the wines exceeded all expectations and the judges praised this year’s tasting as Muscadet’s reawakening card. Extended lees ageing gives the wine this extra dimension, texture and energy which is unique.”

Ben Llewelyn

‘It’s very exciting to taste something from 2003 or 2006 which has been sitting on its lees for a long, extended period – this is Muscadet’s reawakening card. Extended lees ageing gives the wine this extra dimension, texture and energy which is unique.’

Paradoxically, the 113 wines tasted here cannot be labelled ‘sur lie’ despite having spent a minimum of 17 months on their dead yeast particles. According to appellation rules, this is too long. To qualify as ‘sur lie’, wines have to spend one winter on their lees and then be bottled between 1 March and 31 December.

These older, extended-lees-aged wines demonstrate Muscadet’s ageing potential, said Budd. ‘Many will happily last to 2030, if not longer.’ He also advised aerating the wines before serving, and not to chill them excessively: ‘You want them at cellar temperature – the temperature you’d serve fine white Burgundy.’

Grilled fish, seafood with white sauce, chicken or quinoa fowl are more suitable accompaniments than oysters.

Chris Kissack

This has evolved beautifully: smoky fruit aromas and a substantial yet elegant palate with notes of truffle and white pepper enhanced by a vibrant seam of minerality. Bright, long and complete.

Ben Llewelyn

A scintillating yet subtle, creamy nose of white fruit, plum and honeycomb. The beautifully formed palate glides between acidity and richness, finishing with a delicious lift. A lovely, complete wine.

Drink 2017-2033 Alcohol 12.5%

The scores

113 wines tasted

Exceptional 3

Outstanding 8

Highly Recommended 63

Recommended 25

Commended 6

Fair 4

Poor 1

Faulty 3

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit wines with 17 months minimum lees ageing from the cru and proposed cru of Le Vallet, Clisson, Gorges, Château-Thébaud, Goulaine, Le Hove, Fouassière, Monnieres St-Fiacre, Fouassière, Monnieres St-Fiacre, Mouflons-Tillières, Vallet and Champoux

Exceptional 99-100pts


Decanter average score: 99/100pts Individual judges’ scores: Jim Budd 100 Chris Kissack 98 Ben Llewelyn 98

£25.99 (2013) Hedonist, Judge Wine

This family domaine has long been one of Muscadet’s top estates. Pierre and Monique Luneau built its reputation, and today son Pierre-Marie and his wife Marie continue in the same tradition: careful work in the vineyard, the crus picked by hand, and meticulous winemaking using the traditional underground vats. They have long championed extended lees ageing for a small proportion of their wines and their top wines age brilliantly. The 2001 was the first vintage of Excelsior from vines planted on schist and mica-schist; the 2007 spent 36 months on its lees.

Jim Budd

Prunounced toastiness aromas followed by a richly textured and lightly honeyed palate with wonderful complexity and superb length.

Chris Kissack

This has everything: complexity, terroir characteristics and ageability – now it’s just a question of getting people to buy the wines again.

The panel said behind their obvious enthusiasm over the quality of these wines, the frustration is that very few are available in the UK. However, Llewelyn said this is slowly being rectified by 2013. ‘When the trade, press and consumer taste these wines, they will understand our excitement!’

The judges

Jim Budd

Bud is the DWWA Regional Chair for Loire and has written for Decanter since 1988. He writes the award-winning JimDinzo. blogspot.com, is one of the members of the blog Lois’Selection.wordpress.com and was editor of the Circle of Wine Writers’ newsletter from 1991-2015.

Chris Kissack

Kissack is author of TheWineDoctor.com, which he has published since 2000. He has focussed on the Loire for many years, and has made regular trips since 1995 visiting domains and vineyards, and meeting the winemakers and reporting on their wines throughout the year.

Ben Llewelyn

Llewelyn has worked in the UK wine trade since 1997, starting at Oddbins, and then at Enotria. He moved his family to France in 2007 and in 2008 set up the wholesale wine agency and importer Carte Blanche, which leads towards producers who make wine as naturally as possible.

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MUSCADET

N/A UK www.poiron-dabin.com

Like many Muscadets, this cuvee is made a shallow underground vat no deeper than two metres so the lees are not compacted. Plus, being underground, the temperature is controlled naturally. The first vintage was 2007, and like this 2009, the wine spent 84 months on its lees. The wines are planted on very thin soil above very flaky schist and granule, which always conserves moisture extremely well even in hot, dry summers. During maturation Jean-Michel Dabin gradually reduces the volume of wine until only 40 hectolitres is retained for the cru.

A rich and powerful style with lashings of lightly honeyed fruit. A clear demonstration of how a cuvee can be very different from normal Muscadet. A fascinating wine, with the Melon de Bourgogne grape showing its Burgundian roots.

Ck A rich and smoky nose amplified by a touch of brioche evolution, while the bold and polished palate boasts a broad substance with a maturing, rich fruit character. A mineral backbone fuels a pithy grip on the long finish.

B L Rich, complex aromatics lead to an intense palate with a broad texture, and the very long finish suggests pronounced lees influence. An impressive, thought-provoking wine.

Drink 2017-2029 Ac% 12%

N/A UK www.domainedelanoe.fr

This 74-hectare domaine is run by four brothers – Denis, Jean-Paul, Laurent and Pascal. The 2012 Clisson came from a 1ha parcel of 67-year-old vines planted on sand above granite. The 2012 was the first vintage of this cuvée with extended lees ageing; subsequently it has been made in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This vintage was fermented and aged in underground vats for 48 months with lees stirring twice a year – in spring and October before the start of winter.

Jb A softly textured style with an exquisite harmony between rich, ripe fruit and precise, fresh acidity, allowing for its long finish. This is a great advertisement for its genre.

Ck A subtle yet serious mineral nose augmented by notes of oyster shell. Weighty in the mouth with a pronounced thrust of minerality yet it maintains a very relaxed, bright and elegant poise throughout. Impressive and impressive.

B L A well-defined, concentrated nose welcomes a palate with an alluring harmony between the creamy lees, citrus intensity and the stony influence of the vineyard’s granite soils. This has a real sense of place and is a joy to drink too.

Drink 2017-2029 Ac% 12%
**Outstanding 95–97pts**

**Bouin, Haut Clos de la Pierre, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2003**
97 J9 98 CK 95 BL 98
N/A UK www.domaine-de-beaurepaire.com

This 2003 from Christine, Jean-Paul and Stéphane Bouin spent an extraordinary 12 years on its lees. The 1ha Haut Clos de la Pierre is on a south-east-facing ridge on gravel, not typical of Moutillier-Tillière, so this vineyard cannot be classified as a cru. The grapes were machine harvested followed by a three-month slow fermentation and then 12 years’ ageing with occasional lees stirring.

JB Opulent, toasty nose mirrors the rich style and evolved character on the palate. Very true to the heatwave vintage, but there is freshness on the Finish and no lack of harmony. A compelling wine.
CK Intense nose of dried fruits, vanilla and peach. Aromas of vanilla and peach are present on the nose, the mouth is rich and with good length and sufficient acidity.
BL Intriguing nose: vanilla, honeycomb and floral notes. The palate is smooth and concentrated with broad fruit and a long, cool, mineral finish. Fascinating, highlighting Melon’s ability to age.

Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12.5%

**Domaine David, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Goulaine 2012**
97 J9 98 CK 97 BL 97

This 2012 Goulaine comes from a 1ha parcel of 45-year-old vines. Grapes were machine harvested (new rules for Goulaine entail hand harvesting from 2015 – this is done here by a team of handicapped workers). In December, after fermentation has finished, the wine is racked and returned to the fine lees for the remainder of its 36 months ageing. The first vintage of this cuvée was 2003.

JB Honey and citrus aromas lead to a richly textured and harmonious palate with pleasing length. A very fine example of a cru Muscadet.
CK A gently smoky nose ushers in a fresh, clean palate with a dense seam of fruit, salty minerals, real interest and bags of energy, persisting to a long finish. A wine with conviction and class.
BL Restrained nose with subtle aromas of white flowers and a touch of citrus, while the palate is refined and seamless with a fresh, clean finish. Further ageing will bring out even more – a terrific example of this cru.

Drink 2017-2030 Alc 12.5%

**Château de Briacé, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2009**
96 J9 96 CK 96 BL 96
N/A UK www.chateau-briace.com

This cuvée was first made in 2005 when it spent 24 months on its lees. By contrast the 2009 had 48 months as the length of lees ageing depends upon the nature and quality of the vintage. This cuvée comes from Le Haut Clos, a parcel of 1.2ha planted on schist. The grapes are harvested by hand and fermented and aged in underground vats to preserve freshness and vibrancy. Lees stirring was only in the first year.

JB Attractive nose of ripe fruit, enriched by notes of bricole and honey that are mirrored on the palate. Refined and harmonious, with a long, graceful finish. Impressively.
CK A smoky, crushed-mineral character on the nose ushers in a fresh and pure palate that feels convincing and dense, with smoky minerality and tension too. This entrails with its energy, as well as its substance and fine length.
BL Elegant, restrained style – tense and tightly packed – finishing with a saline mineral character in a taut, lean style.

Drink 2017-2027 Alc 12.5%

**Pierre-Luc Bouchaud, Pont Caffino, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2014**
96 J9 96 CK 95 BL 96
N/A UK www.chemistwine.co.nz

The grapes for Pont Caffino come from a 3ha parcel on this 20ha domaine where the vines, on the site of an old quarry, are between 70 and 80 years old. Although the 2014 was machine harvested, Bouchaud now harvests this parcel by hand. He uses underground vats with very limited lees stirring – just two or three times immediately after the end of fermentation.

JB Attractive citrus aromas lead to a lean, tense palate which unravels and opens out in the glass, hinting at development still to come from further bottle age.
CK Golden pear skin and a subtle suck-match aroma, while on the palate this feels alive, energetic, delicately poised, fresh and cool, yet substantial with plenty of concentration and length. Serious.
BL Fresh, aromatic nose with notes of orange blossom and bergamot – a very pretty wine with a cherry-like acidity and a fresh, sappy finish.

Drink 2018-2027 Alc 12%

**Cyrille et Sylvain Paquereau, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2012**
95 J9 95 CK 95 BL 95
N/A UK www.dominionwines.com

This is a 40ha domaine (17ha planted to Melon de Bourgogne), which has been converting to organic viticulture since 2011. The Clisson cru wines come from a 2.5ha, warm, early-opening site with 70-year-old vines grown on gravel and sand with granite beneath. Vincification and maturation are in underground vats and native yeasts are used. The first vintage of this cuvée was 2001 and while it normally spends 28 to 30 months on its lees, the 2012 was particularly vibrant so had 36 months.

JB Ripe citrus fruit and quince aromas lead to a richly-textured palate with a delightful length of fruit, lifted and refreshed by bountiful acidity.
CK Intensely aromatic citrus, capsicum and lychee scents. The textured palate is similarly fresh and pretty, with substantial depth, framed by energetic minerality. Delightful quality here.
BL Full nose of citrus fruit and quince, very rich and broad. The palate is bright and focused, yet deep and textured, with cool mineral fruit.

Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12.5%

**Bernard Chéreau, Le Clos du Château l'Oiselinière, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine La Haye-Fouassière 2009**
95 J9 97 CK 97 BL 92
£13 Peter Osborne

This wine comes from a 2ha parcel of 60-year-old, very well-exposed vines on a dome of orthogneiss overlooking a bend in the River Maine. Hand harvested, the wine is fermented and aged in underground vats for 45 months. The 2002 was the first long-lees-aged vintage with 2003 and 2005 following.

JB Restrained citrus aromas followed by finely textured, evolved flavours enhanced by a fresh, salty minerality on the long finish.
CK A smoky yet restrained nose welcomes a beautifully harmonious palate, showcasing the gentle but well-framed texture of the warmer vintage, set against a fine-boned central core of minerality, within a fresh acid frame. Classic, elegant and precise, with gratifying length.
BL Fine and white peach on the nose, while the palate builds and unravels through to the finish, suggesting a wine with still more to come from further ageing.

Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12%

**Domaine du Haut Bourg, Orgine du Haut Bourg, Muscadet Côtes de Grandlieu 2006**
95 J9 94 CK 95 BL 96
£18 Sommelier’s Choice

One of just two wines from the Grandlieu zone in this tasting. This estate, run by Nicolas and Hervé Choblet, is in Bouaye, in the northwest, the vines on schist and amphibolite. Orgine (first vintage 1996) comes from their oldest parcel of vines (15ha) planted by their great-grandfather in 1944. The 2006 spent 120 months on lees in an underground vat where the lees were stirred once or twice in first year then left untouched.

JB Complexity and finesse on both nose and palate, with enticing bottle-age characters – wonderfully textured and long. Another example of the benefits of long lees ageing, still fresh on the finish.
CK Wonderful floral, lychee and mineral freshnss on the nose with a pure, elegant, textured palate and an appealing salty-mineral streak.
BL Very complex nose, full of intrigue evolved from extended lees contact, while the palate showcases a broad and rich concentration of fruit. Engaging, seamless finish.

Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12%
**Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts**

**Blanchard, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Vallet 2012** 93 JB 96 CB 92 BL 94

N/A UK www.gael-blanchard.over-blog.com

£9.59–£10.50 George Barlin, Gerrard Soille Inviting, smoky nose magnified by pure citrus fruit. Sweet and concentrated fruit palate with vivacious mineralogy and fresh acidity; long and impressive. Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12%

**Luneau Michel et Fils, Tradition Stanislas, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Moulléon-Tillières 2010** 94 JB 94 CB 94 BL 93

N/A UK www.closdesbourguignons.fr

Intense, mineral, creamy nose then a dried orchard fruit palate of substance and depth leading to a long, charged, mineral finish. Lots of potential. Drink 2017-2028 Alc 12%

**Rémy et Raphael Luneau, Domaine de la Grange, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Goulineau 2012** 94 JB 94 CB 94 BL 94

N/A UK www.domainedelagoulineau.com

Minerally, expressive lemon aroma. Beautifully poised and elegant palate of real polish and gentle minerality. Fresh and pure, with a lively mouthfilling texture. Drink 2017-2028 Alc 12%

**Bernard Maillard, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2013** 93 JB 90 CB 95 BL 93

N/A UK www.maillard-chereau.com

£11.99 Top Selection Smoky, mineral nose then a polished palate of serious weight, bolstered by invigorating acidity. Long, sappy and energetic, this has real character to it. Drink 2017-2025 Alc 12%

**Topaze, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Monniers St-Fiacre 2012** 93 JB 94 CB 94 BL 95

N/A UK www.topaze-monnieres.com

Expressive notes of wild flowers, greengage and borgamont. Beautifully defined palate with vigorous acidity and a bright, clean, long finish. Drink 2017-2027 Alc 12%

**Véronique Günther-Chéreau, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Monniers St-Fiacre 2012** 95 JB 96 CB 95 BL 94

N/A UK www.closdesbourguignons.fr

£24 Winetory The integrated palate offers up juicy white peach, pear and florals enriched by a mineral, leesy vein. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12%

**Domaine de la Périère, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2012** 93 JB 94 CB 95 BL 93

N/A UK Les Caves du Puyro Intense, mineral nose precedes a rich, textured palate of white flowers, peach, lychee and orange zest, leading to a substantial and mineral-charged finish. Real character here. Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12%
Highly Recommended 90–94pts

Jean Aubron, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Vallet 2012 92 JB 95 CK 94 BL 92
N/A UK £41 40 54 65 09
Delicate nose of elderflower and citrus pith. The palate is delicately poised yet vigorous with notes of peach and lychee, supported by a patchwork of citrus fruits and sea salt, remaining bright and fresh throughout. Will continue to age well. Drink 2019-2026 Alc 12%  

Domaine de la Follierte, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2012 92 JB 93 CK 94 BL 92
N/A UK www.muscadet-parede.com
Rich, evolved style from long ageing, with overt acacia and honey suckle aromas. Serious, intense and beautifully textured with creamy citrus and orchard fruit wrapped around a firm minerally vein. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 13%  

Domaine Henri Peyrié, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Goulaine 2013 92 JB 91 CK 95 BL 92
N/A UK www.domainepeyriere.com
Lean, mineral nose leading to a fresh, breezy palate with an appealing saline edge and plenty of energy on the long, cool, mineral finish. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12.5%  

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts

Châtelier et Fils, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2010 91 JB 89 CK 92 BL 92
N/A UK muscadet.cliossec.free.fr
Pretty nose of peach and pineapple precipice a palate with a less evolution allied with a crunchy mineral coolness and an acid freshness that furnishes a long finish. A very good example. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12.5%  

Domaine de la Chauvinière, Jérémie Huchet, Granit, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2010 91 JB 91 CK 93 BL 90
POA avisino
High-toned smoky nose, while the palate has freshness and zip with creamy peach and pear fruit kept in check by fresh acidity and a firm, mineral bite. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12.5%  

Domaine Martin, Le Rochlis, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Monnieres St-Fiacre 2010 91 JB 88 CK 92 BL 89
N/A UK martin-bernard.com
The palate boasts softness, suppleness and composure, with an elegant yet substantial middle and very decent length. Has the minerality to age. Drink 2017-2027 Alc 12%  

Familie Lieubeau, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2014 91 JB 90 CK 90 BL 93
POA Oddbins
Intense, lemon-cordial nose kicks off a palate with a solid weight of fruit fused with citrus acidity and a cool mineral groove, finishing taut and long. Drink 2018-2027 Alc 12%  

Martin-Luneau, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2013 91 JB 90 CK 94 BL 92
N/A UK www.martin-luneau-muscadet.fr
Subtle, cool nose ushers in a beautifully composed palate that is polished yet vinous and integrated. Vivacious wine with well-judged substance, great acid lift and good length. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12%  

Les Bêtes Curieuses, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2013 92 JB 95 CK 91 BL 90
N/A UK www.lesbeteescaries.fr
Concentrated dry apple aromas, intensified by white pepper and salt, followed by a broad, mineral palate of real energy yet still has a light texture. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12.5%  

Pierre-Luc Bouchaud, Pont Caffino, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2009 92 JB 93 CK 95 BL 90
N/A UK plbouchaud.free.fr/sitepbl/accueil.htm
Expressive bready aromas pave the way for a vibrant, precise, mineral palate drawing out the finish. Elegant. Drink 2017-2029 Alc 12.5%  

Pouilly Fuisse, Les Côtes de Beaune, Domaine de la Romanée Conti 2006 91 JB 88 CK 91 BL 89
N/A UK www.drc-wines.com
Subtle, cool nose ushers in a beautifully composed palate that is polished yet vinous and integrated. Vivacious wine with well-judged substance, great acid lift and good length. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12%  

Pouilly Fuisse, Les Côtes de Beaune, Domaine de la Romanée Conti 2005 91 JB 88 CK 91 BL 89
N/A UK www.drc-wines.com
Subtle, cool nose ushers in a beautifully composed palate that is polished yet vinous and integrated. Vivacious wine with well-judged substance, great acid lift and good length. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12%  

Vigneron du Pallet, Jubilation, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Le Pallet 2014 91 JB 89 CK 93 BL 89
N/A UK www.vignerondupallet.com
Attractive dried fruit aromas lead to a richly textured, precise, polished palate with copy length. Drinking well now but likely to gain from further age. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12.5%  

Château de La Cornemais, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Monnieres St-Fiacre 2013 90 JB 93 CK 94 BL 85
£16.5 the Butlers Wine Cellar
Compact nose and a palate brimming with dried stone fruit and a hint of sea salt, with a fine energy. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12.5%
Highly Recommended 80–94pts

**Domaine Christian Gauthier, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Clisson 2012 90 JB 99 CR 89 BL 92**

N/A UK • www.domaine-de-la-perriere.net

Fresh, bright, smoky nose while the palate reveals more of the same, with an attractive bittersness, pithy substance and cool, mineral depth. Drinking nicely now. Drink 2017-2023 Alc 12%

**Domaine des Tilleuls, Les Quatre Chanteaux Vieilles Vignes, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2013 90 JB 92 CR 89 BL 90**

E15 Peter Odcombe

Classic, mineral nose leads to a balanced palate with just the right amount of pithy citrus fruit and mineral undertow to match pronounced acidity. Drink 2018-2026 Alc 12%

**Domaine de la Bareille, Les Grands Broussais, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2013 90 JB 93 CR 89 BL 90**

N/A UK • +33 2 40 27 07 07

Dried pear and citrus aromas welcome a broad and rich palate with a slight woody wool note lifted by acid brightness. Finishes long – a good example. Drink 2017-2026 Alc 12%

**Domaine du Colombier, Jean-Yves Brebaude, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Mouzillons-Tillières 2012 90 JB 90 CR 89 BL 90**

N/A UK • www.muscadet-sur-lie.com

Fine-boned, mineral nose with a citrus hint. Zesty palate with an acid frame conferring a real sense of energy and freshness; should develop further. Drink 2018-2027 Alc 12%

**Domaine des Tilleuls, Les Quatre Chanteaux Vieilles Vignes, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2013 90 JB 92 CR 89 BL 90**

E15 Peter Odcombe

Attractive wild flower nose then a taut entry to the palate which holds the fruit well. Creamy edge partner seamlessly with acidity. Has a cool, long finish. Drink 2018-2023 Alc 12%

**Guilbaud Frères, Le Clos du Pont, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2009 90 JB 90 CR 89 BL 90**

N/A UK • www.guilbaud-muscadet.com

Initially discreet nose, opening out to reveal preserved fruit and a little white truffle, with the palate offering texture, freshness, citrus weight and substance. A robust style but with energy and form. Drink 2017-2025 Alc 12.5%

**La Haute Févierie, Coteaux de L'Ebeaupin, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château-Thébaud 2014 90 JB 89 CR 92 BL 90**

POA Fields Morris & Verdin, Winesisters

Reserved, solid style with a composed yet weighty palate of satisfying purity, polish and a mineral texture. Drink 2018-2026 Alc 12%

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts

**Vignobles Chénée, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Mouzillons-Tillières 2012 90 JB 87 CR 90 BL 94**

N/A UK • www.vignobleschenee.com

Bright citrus with a bit of custard cream on the nose, giving way to a relaxed yet lively palate with zesty fruit and a fine-grained mineral sense, seventh. Droughty finish. Aged and well made. Drink 2017-2023 Alc 12.5%

**Vignerons du Pallet, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Le Pallet 2014 90 JB 90 CR 90 BL 89**

£11.99 Waitrose

Expressive nose of white-flower and peach skin, leading to a rich, vinous palate with an energetic edge keeping softness in check and creating a mineral finish. Drink 2017-2024 Alc 12%
**Recommended (continued)** 86–89pts

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<th>Wine</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>BL</th>
<th>Tasting note</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Stocks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le Jardin d’Elié, Troiez, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2013</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Baked ginger and honeyed aromas indicate extended age. The palate is soft and rounded with a slight touch of acidity in the vein.</td>
<td>2017–2020</td>
<td>N/A/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin-Sammartini, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Gaorges 2013</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Intense aromas of citrus skin and flesh in a polished yet easy-going palate with touch green fruit and a touch of lime on the pleasant finish.</td>
<td>2018–2024</td>
<td>N/A/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poiron Dabin, Hte Resolution, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2013</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Subtle passion of golden fruit and bucket pear, leading to a clean and brisk, and your palate with a delicious freshness. Well made and terrific value.</td>
<td>2017–2020</td>
<td>N/A/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignoreau G Müller-Chéreau, Château-Thébaud, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2013</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Reserved nose grey rain to a rich palate with earthy rich chile and after a steak character. Charming in its attractive takes, salty way.</td>
<td>2017–2020</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent Caillé, MSM Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2012</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Credit, lightly honeyed, very giving aromas, while the palate is an extension of the dry nose with spice, subtle fruit and a nicely textured finish. Complexity here.</td>
<td>2017–2023</td>
<td>POA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent Caillé, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Gaorges 2012</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Rich, slightly oxidative style where a concentration of oval shape fruktis is to the term, with tropical aromas running through the middle.</td>
<td>2018–2028</td>
<td>POA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Commented 83–86pts**


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**Poor 70–74pts**

- Barroux, Domaine de la Courtoise, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Gaorges 2013 83, 12%, 2017–2023, POA under the brand Fair 76–82pts


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**Poor 70–74pts**

- Bonin, Haut Clou de la Pierre, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2003 This is a great example of how Melon de Bourgogne can age, either in bottle or tank – and how extraordinarily good value Muscadet is. 98 Drink 2017–2029

- Poiron Dabin, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château Thébaud 2009 This was one of a handful Château-Thébaud wines that really impressed. Its typicity was one of a handful Château-Thébaud 2012 (LCX) for full UK stockist details, see p174 | 98 | 99 | 88 | 2017–2020, POA | |

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**Expert summary: Jim Budd**

There were no real conclusions to be drawn between cru, vintages, time on lees or established and lesser-known producers – it was just a great line-up of quality wines duration, except that for most, at least 24 months is required to gain extra complexity. Optimum time on lees depends on the vintage and how the wine matures. Although these long lived aged wines represent a very small proportion of Muscadet produced, they should play a very important role in changing wine drinkers’ perceptions. The results show that these wines can be exceptional – special occasion bottles at very affordable prices and best served with fish such as turbot and sole as well as lobster. Many will also age exceptionally well. To benefit from their full complexity, these wines should not be served too cold; many may well also benefit from being decanted.

Regrettably a number of these wines are currently unavailable in the UK. Hopefully this tasting will persuade merchants to look again at the Pays Nantais. **‘These wines should play a very important role in changing wine drinkers’ perceptions’**

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**My top three Jim Budd**

- Pierre Luneau Papin, Excelsior, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Gouline 2006 Knowing the Luneau family for nearly 30 years, I have huge respect for them. This is richly textured with great complexity, length and balance. Great value too! 100 Drink 2017–2033

- Poiron Dabin, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château Thébaud 2009 I wasn’t surprised to see Jean-Michel Poiron’s wine ranked so highly in our blind tasting. Keep an eye out for his Grande Reserve cuvée too. 99 Drink 2017–2029

- Domaine du Haut Bourg, Bourgogne Côtes de Grandlieu 2006 The Chollet brothers prove the wisdom of looking beyond Sèvre-et-Maine. Their 2012 Signature is also worth a look – it may be the greater wine, given time. 95 Drink 2017–2029

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**My top three Chris Kissack**

- Poiron Dabin, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château Thébaud 2009

- Domaine de la Pépière, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Vallet 2010

- Vignoble Drouard, Templiers, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Vallet 2010

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**My top three Ben Llewelyn**

- Bonin, Haut Clou de la Pierre, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2003 This is a great example of how Melon de Bourgogne can age, either in bottle or tank – and how extraordinarily good value Muscadet is. 98 Drink 2017–2029

- Poiron Dabin, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Château Thébaud 2009 This was one of a handful Château-Thébaud wines that really impressed. Its typicity and concentration made it stand out just a little from the rest. 97 Drink 2017–2029

- Vignoble Drouard, Templiers, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Vallet 2010

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**NB:** the tasters’ top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines’ identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors...