

# DOMAINE BARON

## TOURAINE SAUVIGNON BLANC & COT



Grass is planted between rows but not under vines.



Samuel Baron, inspecting early growth in 2010.

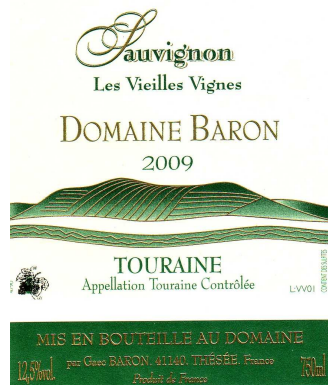


Cot vines turn a characteristic red color in the fall.

Jean-Pierre and his son Samuel Baron own a 14 hectare family domaine in the village of Thesee, on the right-bank of the Cher River. Beginning in 1946, Jean-Pierre's father was among the first to plant **Sauvignon Blanc** grapes in this region which is now recognized as *Appellation Touraine Controlee*. Jean-Pierre Baron decided to leave the local co-op and begin estate bottling with the 1998 vintage and a new Loire star was born. In recent years, he has handed the vineyard and winemaking duties to his son, Samuel.

The Barons prune severely in the Fall to limit yields and ensure healthier fruit. They employ a sophisticated program of "*lutte raisonnee*" in respect of the environment to fight vine diseases and parasites. The goal is to grow the healthiest fruit possible at moderate yields. Instead of using herbicides, the topsoil is lightly tilled so as to remove weeds without disturbing the sub-soil, thereby encouraging the vine's roots to go further down into the ground. Recently, Samuel Baron has oriented the domaine's vineyard practice towards organic farming. Only organic, composted fertilizer is used when necessary. Beginning with the 2010 growing season, he is cultivating about half of his vineyard (including the **Cot** parcel) fully organically and is aiming to attain "*Agriculture Biologique*" certification in the coming years.

Baron's **Sauvignon Blanc** vineyard is situated on a south-east-facing slope with a clay-limestone-silex soil. The vines average 35 years old. The grapes are gently pressed and lightly clarified (*debouillage*). Fermentation takes place in tanks at controlled, low temperatures and the wine is left on the lees over the winter before racking and bottling in March. Baron's **Sauvignon Les Vieilles Vignes** has fine con-



centration, a lovely citrus bouquet and a plump palate. It is a ripe, crisp wine with unmistakable Loire character and is the equal of many Sancerres in the market, and a far better value.

The Barons also cultivate one hectare of 35 year-old **Cot** (the local name for **Malbec**) vines planted on a south facing gentle slope with a well drained, limestone-clay soil. This vineyard was planted to Cot before phylloxera. It was later replanted with other varieties and then

re-converted to Cot by Jean-Pierre Baron in an effort to revive the cultivation of Malbec that was very common in the Touraine region in times past. The vines are all *selection massale* plants (and not clones) selected from a nearby 50-year-old, ideal Cot vineyard. Baron farms in a sustainable way, according to the standards of the *Terra Vitis* protocol. Grass is planted between the rows and plowed under below the vines. Baron harvests at full maturity in early Oc-

ttober. The grapes are all de-stemmed and given an 8-day maceration period at 20 degrees C. Baron carries out only one pumping over operation (*remontage*) every two days to attain sufficient extraction without over concentrating the wine. He racks the wine early so that the alcoholic fermentation finishes without the presence of solids that would otherwise impart an astringent element to the wine. Baron adds less than 20% of press-wine to the final blend since the "*jus de goutte*" already has excellent color and richness. Aging continues in large tanks and Baron bottles his Cot in early July so as to preserve the primary fruit and aromas. The wine is aged another 6 months in bottle before release. Baron's Cot is a deeply saturated, dark purple wine with juicy and spicy black cherry and kirsch flavors and characteristic Loire freshness and succulence.



At left, 40 year old Sauvignon Blanc vines on a south-facing slope with limestone-clay soil.

At right, the vineyard after plowing. No herbicides are used.

Beginning with the 2010 vintage, Samuel Baron is cultivating about half of his vineyard fully organically. He aims to attain "*Agriculture Biologique*" certification in the coming years.

