

Romance & Romorantin

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Gouais Blanc can get just about any grape's juices flowing. This Casanova of the world's vineyard has sired at least 81 distinct varieties, according to [Wine Grapes](#) by Jancis Robinson et al. And Gouais Blanc and Pinot Noir have been at it like rabbits, producing more than 20 offspring including Chardonnay and the Beaujolais berry, Gamay Noir. Less well known than these high achievers is Romorantin, the white grape of the 20-year-old Cour-Cheverny appellation in the Loire Valley.

Legend has it that François I of France ordered 80,000 plants of this vine from Burgundy for his mother's castle in the village of Romorantin near Blois in 1519. However it came about, it's found a good home in Cheverny, which accounts for almost all of France's 70-odd hectares of Romorantin.

The first I'd heard of it was at a tasting of wines brought into Australia by [Halle Aux Vins](#), which had this example from Michel Gendrier at [Domaine des Huards](#). The family's been on the land some 80km east of Vouvray since 1846, and Michel's son Alexandre is a seventh-generation winemaker. La famille Gendrier has followed organic and biodynamic principles for the past 15 years.

This particular wine is 100% Romorantin from 35-year-old vines. The fruit was lightly pressed and fermented using natural yeasts, after which the wine spent six months on fine lees.

The end product has Chablis-like minerality and drive. It also has a ring of good Aussie Semillon about it, combining a young Sem's lemon, nettleness and acidity with the texture of bottle-aged Sem. It's drinking beautifully now, but it's easy to imagine how these wines could age well for 20-plus years, developing stronger notes of honey, flint and petrol as they go.



Domaine des Huards Cour-Cheverny 2011 AOC Cour-Cheverny, Loire

Clear pale straw in colour, with a nose of honeysuckle, nettles, lemon and orange zest, peach skin and creamy lees. This dry, medium-bodied wine has a soft, slightly waxy texture. The palate is supremely

fresh with lemon, honey and a flinty character. It has pulsing vigour through the back palate, with grip and acidity contributing to a long and harmonious finish of honey, spice and bitter-lemon savouriness. This bright, lovely wine is pregnant with food-matching possibilities thanks to its strength and structure. Sole meunière would be a dream.

Costs \$33 at [City Wine Shop](#) in Melbourne – Alcohol 12% – Tasted 29/12/13 – Cork