



## 2011 Domaine Claude Riffault Sancerre les Denisottes

A Sauvignon Blanc Dry White Table wine from Sancerre, Sancerre, Loire Valley, France

Review by David Schildknecht  
*Wine Advocate* # 201 (Jun 2012)  
Rating: (88-89+)  
Drink -  
Cost: \$30

Hints of lanolin and a slightly gummy caramelization a bit awkwardly mark the entirely barrel-raised 2011 Sancerre Les Denisottes, with zesty grapefruit and passion fruit nevertheless overtaking the wood on a palpably lees-enriched palate. There is still, however, a bit of negative synergy right now between the piquancy of grapefruit rind and the effects of wood in the finish. It would be interesting to see how this fares with the additional elevage, though it could also become yet more marked by its wood. As things stood when I visited in April, Riffault was planning to bottle soon. Certainly, though, I don't see this ever acquiring the sort of mineral dimensions that rendered the corresponding 2010 particularly memorable, and I would plan on drinking it over the next couple of years. I was delighted to at last meet young Stephane Riffault (son of this 36-acre estate's namesake) and to taste his entire range of wines, one so unexpectedly extensive that - while I tasted the 2011 and 2010 collections complete - shortage of time and of sample bottles from earlier vintages at his cellar meant that I was by no means able to fill in all of the gaps in my experience since tasting for issue 190. While I could rest relatively easy not having tasted the 2009s, I was sorry that I could experience only one additional wine - but what a one! - of 2008, the vintage from which Riffault's Les Boucauds had so memorably introduced me to this domaine. If - as there is ample reason to anticipate - this young vigneron's expertise only increases; and, more proximately, his 2010s go the way of (let alone surpass) the bottle evolution of the two 2008s I have experienced ... then watch out! Make no mistake: this address in the hamlet of Maison Salle (outside Sury-en-Vaux) is now one of the five or six most exciting estates in the Sancerre appellation. All fruit has since 2008 been picked by hand and sorted on a vibrating belt. Three state-of-the-art presses are employed to permit the leisurely, gentle pressing Riffault deems essential and which no doubt accounts for some of the striking clarity, purity, and textural refinement of his results. He ferments most of his whites in stainless steel but certain lots in non-new barrel ("above all for the sake of texture by working the lees," he explains); while his Pinots ferment exclusively in cement before being transferred to barrel. Harvest in 2011 began September 5 and finished by the 15th, with results whose consistent success (as judged prior to bottling, anyway) should not be overlooked simply due to my notes being juxtaposed with those on an exceptional 2010 collection which Riffault, too, is willing to concede that he nailed! (I made most of my notes on Riffault's sites and regimen of elevage while tasting his 2010s, and I have retained the resulting general observations as part of my tasting notes on the wines from that vintage.) A Jon-David Headrick Selection (various importers), Asheville, NC; tel. (828) 252-8245

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