

Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

Vol. 7 July 2019

The Canal Lateral a la Loire plus the Chateau ^{AND} Cathedral Tour

The Loire river is often considered the last wild river in Europe. The river has just one dam and very few levies. For much of its 1012km length it is allowed to spread out and amble across the center of France.

The Loire flows from the central massif in the south, north toward the city of Orléans and then west to the Atlantic ocean. The river contains a wealth of wildlife, including European beaver, eel and Atlantic salmon.

The valley that the river cuts is often called the Garden of France. This rich valley produces some of France's most famous wines such as Sancerre, Chinon, and Vouvray. The valley is also studded with over a thousand chateaux, each with distinct architectural embellishments covering a wide range of variations, from the early medieval to the late Renaissance periods.

The Canal Latéral à la Loire runs, just as the name says, next to, but not in, the river. It parallels the river's upper reaches as it slides past the towns of Briare and Sancerre and the cities of Cosne-Cours-sur-Loire and the ancient Roman outpost at Nevers.

We traveled on this canal in the summer of 2013 and we will be offering this route again in 2020. This route offers a unique view into the rural French countryside and while it is not far from Burgundy it is separated from its Burgundian neighbors to the east by a line of stout hills.

Twice between boat trips, Sara and I have also ventured into this countryside by car. We've visited the Chateaux of Chenonceau, Valençay, Villandry, Chambord and Samur. Along the way we've stayed in fabulous properties from the tree houses at Les Galants to the family run hotel at Aubigny-sur-Nère where we happily stumbled across a its Michelin guide listed restaurant.

New for 2020, in addition to a week on the canal, we will be offering a 4 day / 3 night roadtrip option. We are calling it the Chateau and Cathedral tour and we'll be visiting and eating at some of the places mentioned above.

The river sets the bucolic tone, the chateaux set the mood of an elegant time, and the cuisine of France sets our table. Would you like to join us as we set off into the [Garden of France in 2020?](#)

Vin blanc: Sancerre

Keep this in mind: quality French wine is named after the place where it is made. Mostly. There are exceptions in Alsace but otherwise the name of the wine is the name of the village and its surrounding region.

Sancerre wine can come in a red, white, or rosé. It is most famous for its white wine and the grape used is Sauvignon Blanc. The less famous reds use Pinot Noir.

Sauvignon Blanc is known for its light, fruity, high-acid flavors. It can smell like grapefruit, lime, and apricots, or more earthy-green like fresh grass and herbs.

Sancerre wines should be served well chilled: use of an ice bucket is encouraged. It pairs nicely with any hot summer day, tart goat cheese, and sweet fresh summer fruit. Sancerre is a light fruit driven wine and accordingly, doesn't age well. Buy the youngest vintage when possible and share with friends on a hot day with gusto.

During next summer's canal boat trip we will be stopping in Sancerre to visit the village and a local winery that is just a short distance from the canal.



GIN

~ July 20th ~

[8 spots still available](#)

We will be sampling: Dutch Genever, London Dry, Plymouth, Sloe, Irish Gun Powder and French Citadelle.

Practical Information:

Class starts @ 7:30pm ~ **sharp**
@ 2620 E. Superior Street.

Cost is \$15/pp.

Class size is limited to 20.

Light *hor d'oeuvres* after tasting.

R.S.V.P. required.

August 17th ~ **RUM.**

Jamaican, White, Gold, Dark, Agricole and Spiced. It may be the best cocktail base.

Party like a pirate!

GENEVER

Just imagine, it's 1585, you are an English sailor, and you've been sent to Holland to assist the Dutch with their war against Spain. Your Dutch allies seem courageous and you ask them, "Where do you get your Dutch courage?" They reply, "From the Genever."

Back in England you show off your special medicinal Dutch drink to your friends and tell them, "This is Dutch courage, it's called Gin."

Something like this probably happened and the English, ever a thirsty bunch, turned gin into one of the world's greatest spirits.

But Dutch gin or Genever or Jenever had been produced in the Low Countries, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, since the middle ages. It was mentioned in the 13th century encyclopedic work, *Der Naturen Bloeme*, from Bruges, and the earliest printed recipe for Genever dates from the 16th-century work, *Een Constelijck Distilleerboec*, from Antwerp.

Originally, Genever was distilled from a barley mash, which the Dutch called a *moutwijn* (malt wine). This spirit must have tasted like medicine because it was considered unpalatable. To add some flavor the Dutch added juniper berries. The Dutch word for juniper berries is *jeneverbers*. In French it's *genievre*. All of that is just too much for an English sailor so they called it Gin.

In the late 1600's, the Dutch monarch William of Orange was made the King of England. He was in and out of trouble with Louis the XIV of France. William passed a law putting high tariffs on French brandy and there was a lot of grumbling in England. To soothe the masses, William allowed for license-free gin production and, just like that, gin became the national drink.

The English never stopped tinkering with the gin recipe. They would in time add exotic botanicals from their far flung empire and in the 1830's, with the invention of the column still, they developed the London Dry gin. This style is what most people recognize and drink today.

We will be tasting Genever, London Dry and more in the July 20th Gin class.



France Info Meetings

Please join us to talk about France 2020 at our home:

Cocktail hour on Tuesday,
July 9th from 5:00-6:30pm
&

Lazy afternoon on Saturday,
July 13th from 2:30-4:30pm.

Relax with a glass of Sancerre as we talk about the 2020 trips. On Saturday the 13th we will also be serving refreshingly cool gin & tonics and playing a round of croquet in the yard.

Please join us for one or both events. Please R.S.V.P.

Midi and the Camargue

We still have 4 spots open for a fantastic week on a boat in the South of France, September 2019.

Week of 9/21-9/28: 4 available
If you are interested in joining us or you'd just like to know more
[follow this link to our Fall 2019 trip planner.](#)