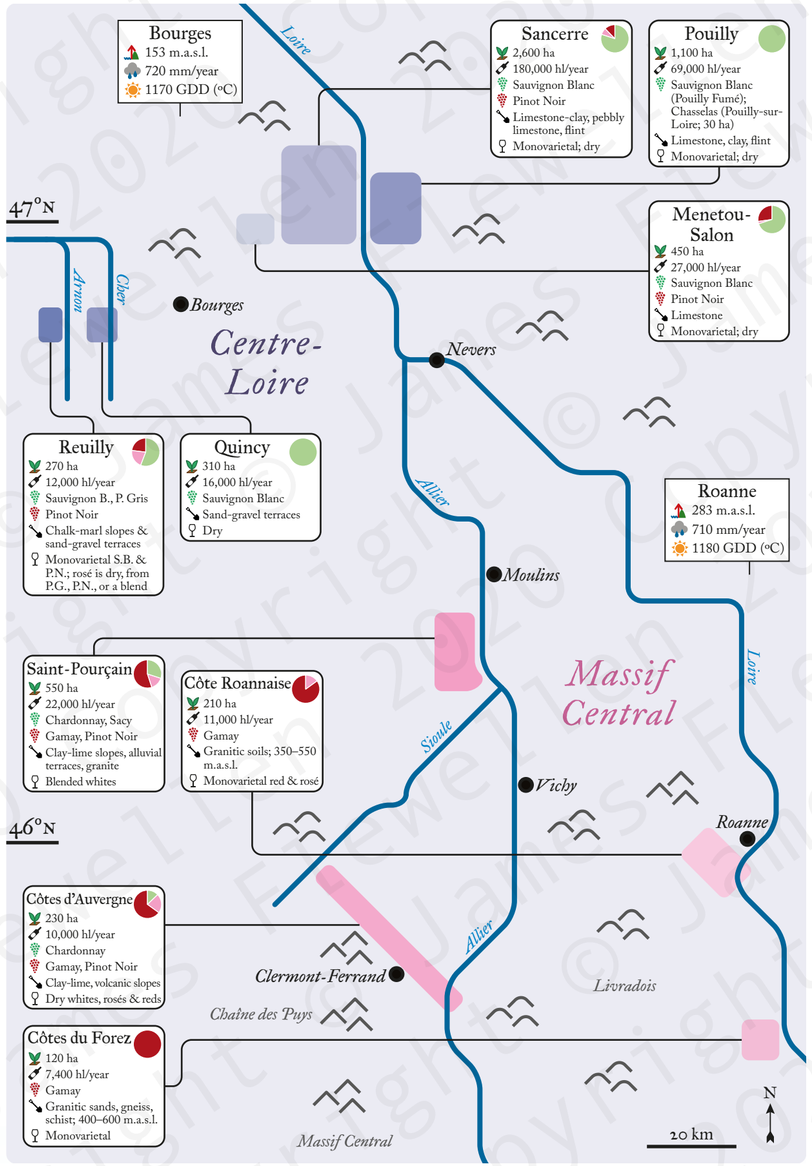

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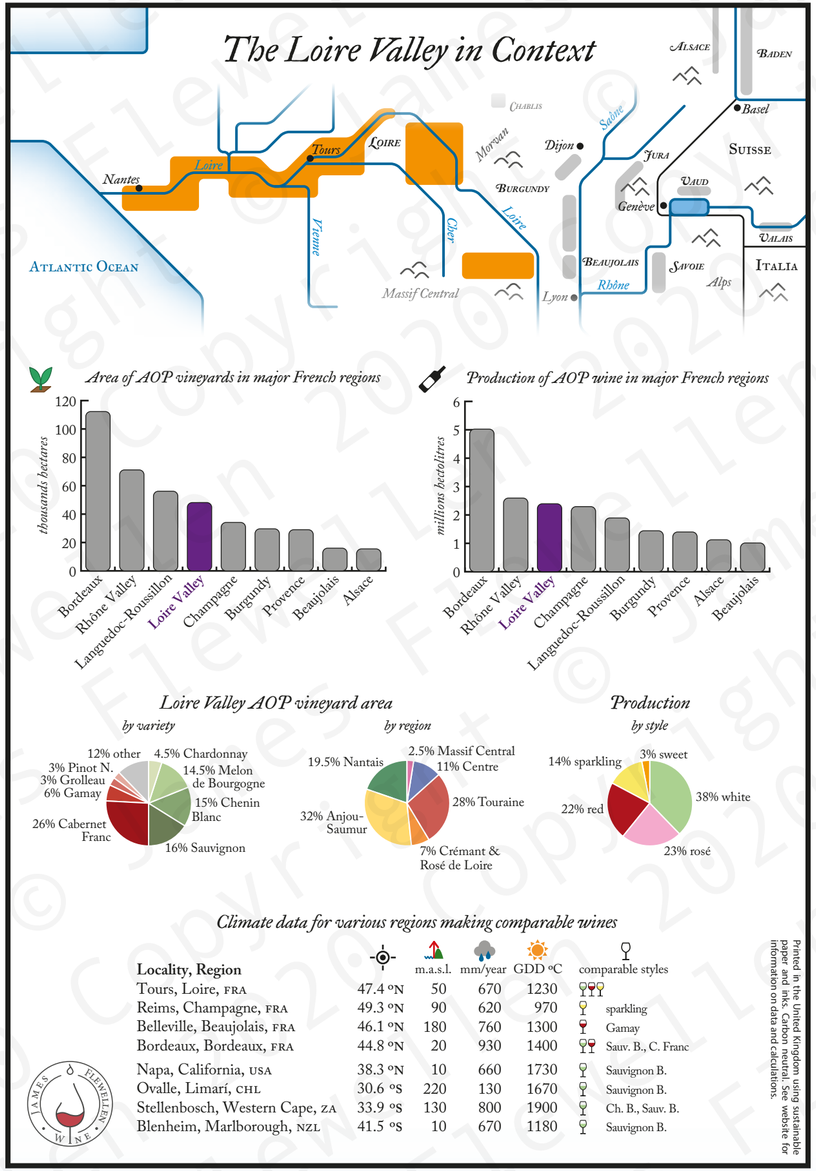

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Wines & Appellations of the Loire Valley

53 *Appellations d'Origine Protégée*

48,000 ha

Sauvignon Blanc
Chenin Blanc

38% white

22% red
23% rosé

Cabernet Franc

320 million bottles / year

There are around 48,000 ha of *Appellation d'Origine Protégée* (AOP) vineyards along the Loire river and its various tributaries. The majority of wine production occurs along the last 500 km of the river as it flows west to the Atlantic Ocean. This stretch can be thought of as four regions, distinct stylistically, geologically and climatically: *Nantais*, *Anjou-Saumur*, *Touraine* and *Centre-Loire*. In addition, a small amount of wine is made further south, near the source of the river, in the *Massif Central* of central France.

The climate is **cool** (EU climate zone B) and transitions from **maritime** in the west through to distinctly **continental** in the east, where the effect of Atlantic breezes is felt less keenly. **Humidity** exerts pressures on vines in the west; **frost** and **hail** are risks in the east. The rivers moderate the climate, provide airflow through the vines and promote **botrytis** in some appellations.

Vines are typically planted on slopes beside rivers, up to around 100 metres above river level; the elevation at river level changes only very gradually along the corridor. The most prized sites are south-facing banks, some of which are steep and terraced.

Soils are highly varied throughout the region. Ancient igneous and metamorphic soils predominate in the west, especially **granite**, **gneiss**, and a dark **schist** known as *Anjou noir*. Sedimentary soils – **clays** and **limestone** – are found from *Saumur* eastwards towards the Centre-Loire. The famed *tuffeau* limestone soils come in two hues: *blanc* (white), which is chalkier and firmer, providing excellent drainage; *jaune* (yellow), which is softer with a higher sand content. **Flint** (*silex*) plays a significant role in the soils of *Pouilly* and *Sancerre*, and **alluvial sands** and **gravels** are found throughout. **Granitic** soils predominate in the more undulating and elevated terrain of the Massif Central.

Wine styles are also diverse. Dry white wines are favoured at both western and eastern extremities of the valley: Melon de Bourgogne in the Nantais and Sauvignon Blanc in the Centre-Loire. The best wines of *Muscadet* must spend a period of time ***sur lie*** – resting on the expired yeasts – before bottling. Chenin Blanc flourishes in the middle regions, whether in the guise of a full-bodied dry white, a botrytised sweet wine (particularly in the *Layon* river valley) or anything in between. These parts are also home to serious, dry reds, primarily from Cabernet Franc, and significant volumes of rosé and traditional method sparkling. The proportion of still and sparkling wine varies year on year; in such a marginal climate, winemakers need to keep their options open and most adapt production to suit the vintage. Appellations in the Massif Central are geographically and stylistically close to Beaujolais and primarily produce Gamay.

Anjou, *Cabernet d'Anjou* and *Rosé d'Anjou* share boundaries. *Crémant de Loire* and *Rosé de Loire* can come from throughout Touraine and Anjou-Saumur. *Val de Loire* is an *Indication Géographique Protégée* (IGP) covering the entire Loire region.

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