

Puzelat-Bonhomme

Touraine and Cheverny from Thierry Puzelat and Pierrot Bonhomme.



Thierry Puzelat.

Profile

Thierry Puzelat is the younger of the two brothers who run Clos du Tue Boeuf, their family estate in Les Montils. In the 90's, the estate had to contend with several difficult years of tiny crops, caused by late frost, mildew, hail or general bad weather, and revenues were tight. Thierry would have liked to expand the estate, by renting or buying more vineyards. Jean-Marie, in his late forties, did not want to add more vineyard and cellar work to his already heavy schedule. So Thierry started a *négociant* business, set up a winery in the village of Monthou-sur-Bièvre, and sourced excellent vineyards and vinetenders to buy their grapes.

True to his conviction that good wine is made from healthy grapes, he has selected vine growers who farm their plots organically, in *bio-dynamie* for some. He now offers a range of local wines, both from Touraine and Cheverny.

One of his most reliable sources is an estate tended in *bio-dynamie* by a neighbor and friend of the owners of Clos Roche Blanche in the hamlet of La Tesnière in Touraine. From vines growing on a soil of clay with silex over hard limestone, Puzelat buys Chenin blanc, Menu Pineau and Pineau d'Aunis grapes at harvest time. Menu Pineau, also called Arbois, is an old Loire varietal that survives in

some areas, but is rarely vinified on its own. Puzelat is very familiar with it since the Clos du Tue Boeuf grows some (Touraine Brin de Chèvre), and he likes the grape for its originality, its mineral and spicy character with apple and apricot pit aromas.

Pineau d'Aunis, sometimes called Pineau rouge, is another obscure, ancient varietal that survives in Touraine, most of the time used in blends with Cabernet franc to produce rosé. Even when vinified as a red wine, as is the case here, it is very light in color, body and alcohol and is deliciously refreshing, spicy, lively and aromatic.

Interview

This interview with Thierry Puzelat stems from a series of emails in October 2010.

How did you end up a vigneron?

I inherited the estate from my father. As a youth, he would make us work in the vineyards whether we wanted to or not and you know, it's normal in adolescence to identify to something else than what your parents do, especially when you're at an age when you just want to have fun riding around on your mobylette and falling in love for the first time. So at first wine wasn't exactly the most riveting prospect. As I got older though I decided to give it a go and became fully involved at around 18 years old.

What's the work like with the vines?

The goal is simply to maintain the health and soul of the vines by keeping them pure.

What about your terroirs?

As far as my terroirs, I prefer a place to geography, pedology or geology. Some places just exemplify well being and that's enough to spend a lifetime there (unless you know more than one of these places!).

What's the winemaking process like?

Healthy vines on healthy soils lead to healthy grapes that have something to say. My "vinification" process (I hate that word) consists of being discreet enough to let the wines tell the story of where they're from.

How do you feel about your AOC and AOC wines?

I give AOC's credit for labeling a geographic location. Ours (Cheverny and Touraine) don't do much to distinguish themselves other than being specific places, so I guess the AOC did it's job. I believe our wines are very typical of our AOC as opposed to the vast majority of the wines that share the same name.

Do you ever have a specific goal in mind with how you want your wines to end up?

I like my wines, but the problem is you become a better taster much faster than a skilled winemaker. In such I always feel like I have some catching up to do!

As far as how I want my wines to end up, vigneronns are not "creators". There's supposed to service their terroir and express it by using their personal experience. You'd have to be crazy and pretentious to think you can dominate your terroir and its history. I hope our wines reflect that.

Did you always work in organic/biodynamic and as a non interventionist in the cellar?

The first time I drank a natural wine it put me in the same state as Bernadette Soubirous in front of the Virgin Mary. A year later I was attempting my first "100% grape" vinifaction. Working organically became an evidence to me a few months later. Ever since, I visit Ville-Morgon every year the way some go to Lourdes; there aren't any miracles, but there's certainly joy for me!

What's your take on the "natural wine" debate?

I think it's an error to defend "natural" wine to the customer based on how it was made. The end result should suffice. On the other hand, it is necessary to lobby around this type of production to defend it against an industry that dreams of seeing it disappear. We can validate this working "naturally" with a minimum of "politics" and a whole lot of good wine.

What do you like to drink?

No limits of region, country, price or notoriety. Me favorite wines are the the ones where the bottle is empty in less than 5 minutes.

Wines



VdF "Le Rouge Est Mis":

Grape: Pinot Meunier

Vines: The grapes come from a vinyard maintained by *Amitié Argonne*, an Orléans based association that encourages the growth and development of local vinyards. The vinyard is entirely biodynamic.

Vinification: the wine is fermented and aged in barrel. Non filtered.

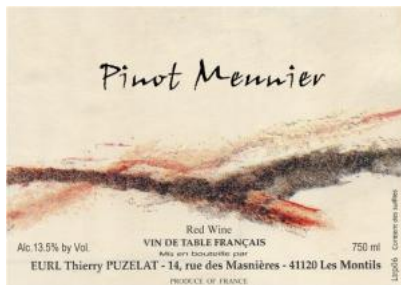


VdF "Le Telquel":

Soil: Flint from the Vallée du Cher.

Grapes: Gamay with a touch of Grolleau and occasionally Pineau D'Aunis.

Vinification: aged in wooden tanks and bottled in the spring.



VdF "Pinot Meunier"



A.O.C Touraine "Sauvignon":

Soil: Flint

Grape: Sauvignon Blanc

Vinification: fermented in vats and barrels. Bottled in the spring.



A.O.C Touraine "Sauvignon Thésée"

Soil: Limestone from the commune of Thésée

Grape: Sauvignon Blanc

Vinification: Fermented then aged for many months in 228 liter wood casks.



A.O.C Touraine "La Tesnière" White:

Grapes: 75% Menu Pineau, 25% Chenin Blanc

Vinification: The juice ferments in 228 liter vats and 500 liter vats, then aged 12 months in barrel before bottling.



A.O.C Touraine "Pinot Noir"

Grape: Pinot Noir

Vinification: fermented and aged in 228 liter bats and 500l casks. Non filtered.



A.O.C Touraine "Pineau D'Aunis"

Soil: Flint and Clay

Vinification: Aged in barrel and wood casks. Non filtered.



A.O.C Touraine "KO: In Côt We Trust"

Grape: Côt

Vinification: Fermented and aged in barrel. Non filtered.

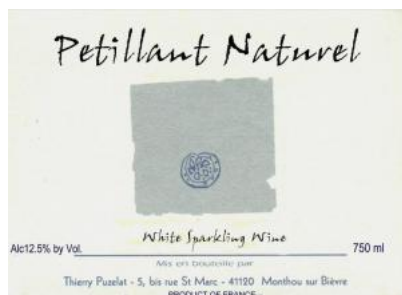


Vdt "KO" Rosé

Grape: Côt



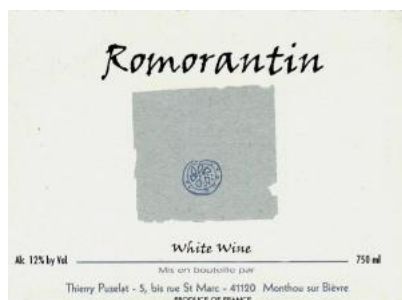
A.O.C Touraine "Pouillé"



Petillant Naturel

Grape: Menu Pineau

Vinification: Vinified using "méthode ancestrale": the wine finishes its fermentation in bottle, with no added sugar or yeast. After this fermentation, it is kept "sur lattes" for 12 to 18 months before being disgorged without dosage.



VdF Romorantin

Soil: Flint

Grape: Romorantin

Vines: Grapes are acquired from 96 year old vines and another plot of "franc de pied" vines planted in 1973 by the edge of the Loire.

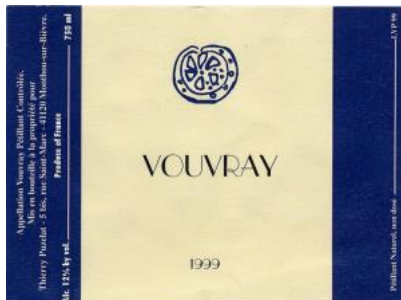
Vinification: Fermented and aged in barrel for 12 to 18 months before release.



A.O.C Pouilly-Fumé:

Grape: Sauvignon Blanc

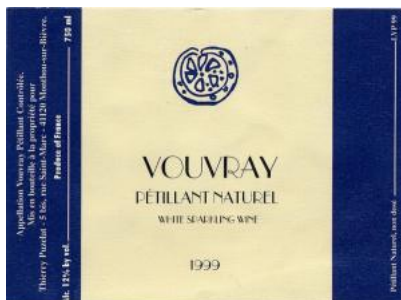
Vinification: fermented and aged in 226 HL Burgundian casks in Tracy-sur-Loire. Once accredited the A.O.C, the wine is transferred to Thierry's cellar for extended aging in barrel.



A.O.C Vouvray:

Grape: Chenin Blanc

Vinification: fermentation in Vouvray then aged in barrel for 18 to 24 months in barrel at Thierry's cellar. If the vintage permits it, exists also in demi-sec or moelleux.



A.O.C Vouvray Pétillant Naturel:

Grape: Chenin Blanc

Vinification: Vinified using "méthode ancestrale": the wine finishes its fermentation in bottle, with no added sugar or yeast. After this fermentation, it is kept "sur lattes" for 12 to 18 months before being disgorged without dosage.