

Clos du Tue-Boeuf

Interview

This interview with Thierry Puzelat stems from a series of emails from 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 with 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 fall 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 in the estate 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 its 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, vignernons are not "creators". They're 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" vinification. 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 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. My favorite wines are the the ones where the bottle is empty in less than 5 minutes.