

LOIRE VALLEY
TOURAINÉ
THIERRY & JEAN-MARIE PUZELAT
LES MONTILS


OVERVIEW | Thierry Puzelat and his older brother, Jean-Marie, run Clos du Tue Boeuf, their family estate in Les Montils. Together, they tend their 10-hectare estate in (in the Cheverny AOC) and rent 6 hectares in a village nearby, in the Touraine AOC. The region, near the hunting grounds of Sologne, has always used a wide variety of grapes. Since the 1960's, the Puzelats' father had been making his own selections of vines to replant, and left them with vines of Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Menu Pineau (or Arbois), Pinot Noir, Gamay, Cabernet Franc and Côt (or Malbec).

VINEYARD AREA: 16 hectares

SOIL TYPES: clay, silex, limestone

GRAPE VARIETIES: sauvignon blanc, chenin blanc, menu pineau, pineau d'aunis, gamay, cabernet franc, côt

Jean-Marie was joined on the estate by Thierry in the early 1990's and they began converting their vines to organic viticulture. When the Cheverny AOC was created with the 1993 vintage, some varieties were outlawed from the blends, and the brothers started a yearly struggle to get their wines accepted under their appellation. Now, when a wine is rejected, they sell it under a Vin de Pays or Vin de Table label.

In addition to their domaine bottlings, Thierry also runs a négociant business in the village of Monthou-sur-Bièvre, and sources from some excellent vineyards. True to his conviction that good wine is made from healthy grapes, he selected growers who farm their plots organically, and/or in biodynamie. He now offers a range of local wines, both from Touraine and Cheverny.

Today, the Puzelats are considered among the leaders of France's natural wine movement.

VINEYARD/CELLAR PRACTICES | The Puzelat philosophy of natural wine started in the mid 1990s when Thierry joined the family business and introduced ideas influenced by his exchanges with François Dutheil of Chateau Sainte-Anne and Marcel Lapierre. In order to vinify this way, the vineyard and soils need to be well tended and free of conventional chemical products. Clos du Tue Boeuf was worked precisely this way by their father with virtually no treatments and no machines, so the soils today remain very much alive.

WINES | One of his most reliable sources is an estate tended in biodynamie 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.

He also produces a Pétillant naturel or sparkling wine made with Chenin blanc in méthode ancestrale (the Cerdon du Bugey method); a vin de pays Romorantin from the Cheverny area and a Cheverny white made with a high proportion of Chardonnay (30%) and Sauvignon Blanc.


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