DOMAINE SAINT NICOLAS

Le Vin d'Antoine

For Thierry Michon, the gregarious force behind one of the Loire's best-kept secrets, Domaine Saint Nicolas, it's all about the soil. Working on schist and silex a stone's throw away from the Atlantic, Thierry is the prophet of biodynamics in this tiny viticultural area. His vineyards never see a non-organic product. He has slowly purchased buffer zones all around his property to prevent chemical products from other winemakers from seeping into his parcels. For him, biodynamics isn't a pragmatic consideration, it's a religion.

Domaine Saint Nicolas sits at the extreme southern end of the Loire delta, just south of Muscadet, but there is no Melon de Bourgogne planted here. Instead, Thierry works old vines of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Grolleau Gris, Gamay, Pinot Noir, Negrette, and Cabernet Franc. If you think working 40 hectares biodynamically (certified by BIODYVIN & DEMETER) is easy, you're crazy. Working by horse and tractor, Thierry usually answers his cell phone from the vineyard, often as late as 10:00 at night. You will not find a more dedicated vigneron in France.

Harvest is, of course, by hand. The whites pass through a sorting table and are then gently pressed and allowed to ferment in large wooden vats or stainless steel tanks. The reds are sorted and then crushed by foot in foudre. The whites and rosés are released as early as March of the year after harvest while many of the reds are aged for up to 18 months in large oak vats, foudres, or demi-muids.

The color of Le Vin d'Antoine (previously Gammes d'Été), the label, and the clear glass may lead one to think that this is not a serious wine but they would be wrong. There is a gregariousness to Thierry Michon who is prone to take up the accordion at a moment's notice but there is nothing frivolous about his wines. This is a thrilling rendition of Gamay with darker cherry fruit that one finds in Beaujolais but with a greater lift of minerality and finer tannins. It's classically Loire, and classically Thierry.

ORIGIN
France

APPELLATION
Vin de France

SOIL
Clay, schist, quartz

AGE OF VINES
15–25

ELEVATION
25 meters

VARIETIES
Gamay

FARMING
Certified biodynamic (DEMETER & BIODYVIN)

FERMENTATION
Hand harvested, hand sorted, natural yeast fermentation in tank, 8 day maceration with pigeage

AGING
Aged 6 month in French oak foudres, bottled unfined, total sulfites 15mg/L

A pale salmon colour with orange reflections. Smell of red berries, spices and a hint of sea breeze. Very balanced between fruitiness and freshness with plenty of red-fruit flavors and a nice salinity at the end. – **THIERRY MICHON**

JON-DAVID HEADRICK SELECTIONS