DOMAINE DE LA NOBLAIE

Chinon Les Chiens-Chiens

A trip to Domaine de la Noblaie is like stepping back in time. For starters, the Crusaders used to live in their back yard. It is still called "The Place of the White Coats" to this day as this parcel of vines was once home to a taxing station used to finance the crusades. The house was started sometime in the 15th or 16th century. They still use a chalk vat that was dug around the 16th or 17th centuries.

Today, the domaine is home base for four generations with Jérôme Billard, the son of François and Madeleine Billard, who leads the property now. Jérôme was fortunate to earn an internship at Chateau Petrus in Bordeaux while still in school and then to earn a spot at Dominus in California. I met Jérôme in Chinon just days after his return to Chinon from California in 2003 and saw enormous potential. He has certainly lived up to that and more.

Noblaie sits at one of the highest points of the Chinon appellation and is essentially two long, sloping hillsides covering 24 hectares. The soil is mostly limestone (some of it quite deep) covered with clay and limestone shards. The property is certified organic by Ecocert and has been working this way since about 2005. All harvests are carried out by hand (rare in Chinon) and in multiple passes through the vines. Unlike many other properties that hand harvest, Noblaie has the same team year after year and the vineyard and winery triage is quite severe. The point is not to produce green or vegetal Cabernet Franc but to find that perfect razor's edge maturity that privileges the earthiness and spiciness of the varietal while showing off the fruit and elegance at the same time.

As opaquely named lieux-dits go, Chiens-Chiens ranks near the top of the list. This site has borne this puzzling name for as long as anyone can remember, and what "Dogs-Dogs" could have originally meant is pure conjecture. However, what it means today is an elegant Chinon from sandy tuffeau soils sporting dark-fruit flavors and a silky texture –hardly what we'd call a dog.

ORIGIN
France

APPELLATION
Chinon

SOIL
Sandy clay tuffeau

AGE OF VINES
30

ELEVATION
60 meters

VARIETIES
Cabernet Franc

FARMING
Certified organic (ECOCERT)

FERMENTATION
Hand harvested and natural yeast fermentation in tank, 20–25 day maceration

AGING
Aged 12 months in 400L neutral French oak barrels then 4 months in tank

ACCOLADES

91 - 2022 Chinon Les Chiens Chiens – Decanter
92 - 2022 Chinon Les Chiens Chiens – Wine Advocate
91 - 2021 Chinon Les Chiens Chiens – Wine Advocate
92 - 2020 Chinon Les Chiens Chiens – Decanter

JON-DAVID HEADRICK SELECTIONS