

THIERRY HESNAULT

Jasnières, Loire



One particularly drab January night we met Thierry Hesnault, one of the Loire's most discreet vigneron, at the little church in the village of Chahaignes. We followed him through a number of lanes into the woods, arriving at the entrance to a small cave. Candles were lit and we stepped out of the rain and into the tuffeau, spending the next few hours tasting his subtle, moving wines.

A native of Touraine, Thierry comes from a family of vigneron and travelled the world working in vineyards before returning to the Loire and working alongside the likes of Eric Nicolas and Jean-Pierre Robinot, whilst teaching at the Lycée Viticole in Amboise. He spent several years acquiring tiny parcels of the oldest vines he could find and in 2009 began making his own wine.

He now farms two and half hectares of old vines of Chenin, Aunis and hybrids spread out in tiny parcels across the Sarthe, planted over a complex melange of clay, iron and silex. In addition to these, Thierry also keeps a couple of old parcels of Gamay planted over deep sand near his home in Touraine. Having grown up amongst the vines, he farms with a real respect for nature, with treatments kept to an absolute minimum and a focus on channelling the energy of these remarkable old plants.

In the cave, Thierry makes wine as they did in yesteryear, without electricity or running water, relying on a deft hand, great patience and the perfect conditions for élevage the tuffeau provides to produce achingly pure wines with a real capacity to age.

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LES MALUSEAUX

2022

Gamay from two tiny parcels of vines between seventy and ninety years old, planted over deep gravel and sand near Thierry's childhood home in the Touraine. The grapes spent two months macerating as whole bunches, before being pressed to old barrels for fifteen months of élevage. This is perhaps the finest Gamay we have tasted from the Loire, offering an abundance of fruit, silky texture and a long, lingering lick of acid. Delicious now, it will age beautifully over the coming years.