

2008 Tinon Tokaji Aszú 5 Puttonyos

Tokaj, Hungary

Although born in the sweet wine appellation of Sainte-Croix-du-Mont in France, Samuel Tinon has chosen Tokaj as the best place to grow wine and raise his three children. He's also quick to remind us all that Tokaj was the favored drink and muse for Leo Tolstói, Pablo Néruda, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Diderot, and Voltaire, so he's already in good company. As the first Frenchman to settle in Tokaj in the modern privatization era, he's also convinced that Tokaj possesses all the same greatness as Bordeaux, Champagne and Burgundy. For the past 500 years Tokaj has demonstrated distinctive terroirs, ideally suited grapes, and unique winemaking styles that according to Samuel, feels "privileged to be part of the active reconstruction of such a Great Wine area...the backbone of a very rich life." After consulting in Australia, Texas, Chile, Italy, traveling to the Jura and Jerez, and an additional 15 years just in Tokaj did he finally start his own production in 2000. What's so compelling about his approach to farming, winemaking and representing Tokaj as a whole is that according to Samuel, "it's hard to find a good balance between paradoxical parameters, like conservatism and modernity, action and inaction, convictions and doubts, choices with short/medium/long term, national and international. It is a permanent challenge with Nature and human relations. And it's full of discoveries." Keeping these sentiments in mind, his wines are among the most transportative, delicious and intellectual we've encountered. He also covers the entire range of traditional Tokaj from Dry Szamorodni, Sweet Szamorodni, Tokaji Aszú, and finally Eszencia. That said, what he makes in a given vintage is determined more by the conditions in the vineyard and the cellar than what the market wants. As Samuel says, "It is not I who is driving the wines, the wines are driving me!"

VINEYARDS

Setting up shop in the village of Olaszliska just north of the village of Tokaj near the banks of the famous Bodrog River, Samuel farms roughly 5 hectares in this area (Határi vineyard) and an additional couple of hectares on the slopes of Mt. Tokaj. The soils on Határi have a 15 million year old volcanic base (tuffa, obsidian), broken up limestone and clay. With 10,000 plants per hectare (90% Furmint, 10% Hárslevelű), and some as old as 90 years, no herbicides or pesticides are used and no tractor usage. Everything is done by hand. As arguably the first classified vineyard appellation system in the world, there is over 500 years of trial and error at work in the region.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

After a long and slow 2 years of barrel fermentation, Samuel is careful to never hermetically seal off the wine — there is always contact with oxygen. This balance between building good oxidation into the wine brings out an incredible aromatic profile. The wine also finishes so stable that no sulphur is added at any time. While many modern renditions of Tokaji Aszú attempt to limit or completely starve the wine of oxidation, Samuel embraces the traditional practices of Tokaj and exposes the wine to oxygen from start to finish. This intentionally good oxidation has coaxed out spicy eastern aromatics in tandem with a high level of sweetness and acidity. This is not simply a dessert wine, but rather something to throw at anything pungent and or spicy. Money allowing, it's amazing to deglaze meats and fish with it as well. According to Samuel, it's also "ideal with pancakes, by the fireside after a long walk."

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Tinon
APPELLATION: Tokaj
VINTAGE: 2008
GRAPE COMPOSITION: 90% Furmint, 10% Hárslevelű
CLIMATE: Cool Continental
SOILS: Volcanic base (Tuffa, obsidian) and clay
EXPOSURE: Southern
ALCOHOL: 10.5%
RESIDUAL SUGAR: 179 g/l
ACIDITY: 8.5 g/l



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