



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

DOMAINE DIOCHON

Country: **France**

Region: **Beaujolais**

Appellation(s): **Moulin-à-Vent**

Producer: **Thomas Patenôte**

Founded: **1935**

Annual Production: **2,500 cases**

Farming: **Lutte raisonnée**

Website: **N/A**



At the foot of the rolling vineyards of Moulin-à-Vent, just across the road from its famous namesake windmill, Domaine Diochon has been making Beaujolais the old-fashioned way since 1935. Bernard Diochon, the beloved, mustachioed character immortalized by photographer Gail Skoff, succeeded his father in 1967. As a torch bearer to the ancestral methods passed down to him, Bernard explains,

I like tannic wines without heaviness; with fruit and floral aromas. I don't like weighty wines with hard tannins. My favorite wines are St Emilion from Bordeaux, and Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits-St-Georges from Burgundy. Every vigneron naturally chooses to make wines in the style they prefer. It works well that Kermit and I share the same taste; it's what has allowed our relationship to last for so long.

Picking when the grapes are perfectly mature, traditional whole cluster fermentations, aging in large old oak *foudres*, and bottling unfiltered in the springtime have characterized the house style.

According to Bernard, one of the most unique qualities of the domaine is the quality of the soil that they farm. Crumbly granite allows the vines to plunge easily towards “gore” subsoil, which feeds the vines, while adding a pronounced mineral component to the wine. (James E. Wilson, author of *Terroir*, explains gore to be an accumulated mass of sand and thin clay deposits with weathered feldspars, mica, and quartz.) Given the old age of his vines, anywhere between forty and one hundred years old, yields are naturally small. These are wines that are easy to enjoy in their youth but can handle years of cellar aging with great ease.

In 2007, Bernard wanted to retire but had no heirs. He appointed Thomas Patenôte as his heir apparent, which has turned out to be an easy transition. We are grateful that the Diochon tradition continues through Thomas, safeguarding the ancestral methods that distinguish real Beaujolais from the mass-produced and highly over-commercialized juice that floods the market today.

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DOMAINE DIOCHON (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Moulin-à-Vent	Gamay	50-80 years	Pink Granite, sandstone, with a manganese-rich sub-soil	5.05 ha

* "ha"=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Vines are situated on granite slopes with east by southeast sun exposure
- Vines are sustainably farmed
- Harvested by hand at the perfect ripeness; *no* chaptalization
- After the harvest, grapes are transferred to temperature-controlled cement *caves*, where they undergo a traditional semi-carbonic, whole cluster fermentation for about twelve days
- Pump-overs are performed daily
- Two rackings take place towards the end of the fermentation process
- The wines age in oak *foudres* for at least 6-7 months before bottling
- Only minute doses of sulfur are used
- Wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered

MISCELLANEA

I forgot what year it was, but it must have been between twenty and twenty-five years ago. Kermit phoned me to let me know that he was looking to expand his portfolio in the Beaujolais. At the time, he was working with producers in Morgon, Fleurie, Brouilly, and Moulin-à-Vent. He asked me if I wouldn't mind sparing a day to visit other producers. As you might expect, I agreed. And so one fine morning, the two of us left in his car. The first visit was in Saint Amour at a friend's place who makes good, but very technical wines, using more modern methods with cement tank or stainless steel aging and a filtered bottling. We stayed for only a half an hour in the winery. Kermit watched, observed, and tasted, but said nothing. We took our leave of the vigneron, and before getting back in the car, he said to me, with a tone that silenced me, "If you are going to continue bringing me to the factories, perhaps it is better that we stop here." I learned my lesson, and we spent the rest of the day with vignerons that work in the old-school style. Alas, only one cru caught his attention; it was a Chiroubles. I don't know what happened, but their collaboration didn't last long.

What a good memory and what a great day for me.

Bernard Diochon



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DOMAINE DIOCHON (continued)

Diochon's Moulin-à-Vent is juicily delicious yet there is a majesty to it. It is full-blown and full-bodied, yet it has a lush, supple, swallowable texture. No hard edges. No astringency. No heat. Moulin-à-Vent is supposed to be the grandest of the region's Grands Crus, and here you sense a certain grandeur throughout the taste experience. And don't overlook the visuals. Diochon's color is always a sight to see. The color, like the flavor, is cassis-like.

This wine is a perennial favorite at the retail store in Berkeley, and Bernard himself is one of the most respected and beloved figures in the region. His wild moustache looks as if it has seen the inside of a million wine glasses, and it's hard to imagine a world without wine like this.

Kermit Lynch