

## Jean Thévenet

Domaine de la Bongran/Domaine Emilian Gillet  
Mâcon-Villages

*You won't see a harvest machine at Jean Thévenet's two wineries, Domaine de la Bongran in Quintaine and Emilian Gillet in Clessé and Viré. The quality-obsessed winemaker, inspired by the traditional methods passed on by his father, harks back to an earlier time.*

### Six Centuries of Winemaking

The property of Domaine de la Bongran is owned by Thévenet, and consists of 37 acres spread throughout the foot of the Quintaine hills in the Maconnais region of Southern Burgundy. A family estate since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, its vineyards devoted essentially to Chardonnay, have been passed on through the generations. The Domaine Emilian Gillet, which

Thévenet rents, is named after his Great Great Grandfather. It consists of 5 acres in Clessé and 8.5 acres in Viré. The viticulture is exactly the same as for Domaine de la Bongran.

### Distinctive Wines

The press has described his style as a new wave, artisanal approach to winemaking. Though, according to him, he is simply making wine as his father would have and his forefathers before him. Thévenet has made his fame with his off-dry and late-harvest cuvées. His style of winemaking is not what one would consider "classic" Mâconnais wine, but what is produced is nothing less than stunning. Unique soil and favorable exposure imparts the Chardonnay grapes with a very distinct flavor. Low yields and long fermentation, without cultured yeast or commercial bacteria, give his wines a golden hue with a perfect balance of fruit and flowers. His massively ripe, rich and concentrated wines are not prototypical Mâcon wine, the residual sugar in his wines can range from 0.4 percent to 15 percent, yet there is still an excellent core of acidity and a sharp focus to

the flavors. This is the key to Thévenet's brilliance. He actually cites historical records to argue that muscat-tinged wines with some sweetness are the authentic local style.

### Vigneron Against the Establishment

Since 1972, Jean Thévenet, together with his son Gautier, have crafted exceptional, distinctive wines on the chalky terroir (Oxonian marl, and middle & superior Bathonian limestone) that is said to be the

secret of the Great White Wines of the Mâconnais. Respecting the tradition which has brought renown to the wines of Quintaine, Thévenet uses no chemicals to treat his vines, and he harvests by hand. He puts to shame many other producers in the Mâconnais, a region dominated by large cooperatives and négociants,

overcropping, mass production and machine harvesting. The vineyards are weeded mechanically and manual harvesting takes place at the last possible moment (November is not uncommon) when the grapes are very ripe, displaying a beautiful golden color (there is often the onset of noble rot).

Thévenet's philosophy is to respect the land, the wildlife and the vine, allowing the pure grape juice to evolve into wine gracefully and as naturally as possible.

Though his domaine is far from the Côte d'Or, his wines are often discussed in the context of Burgundy's elite. Robert Parker, has described him as, "an immensely dedicated and talented winemaker...his wines are highly acclaimed and out of the ordinary...Thévenet is far and away Clesse's top producer."

