

BILLECART-SALMON

The Billecart family has been living in Mareuil-sur-Ay since the 16th century. When Nicolas Francois Billecart married Elisabeth Salmon in the early 1800s the two families' long held vineyards were married as well. This led to Nicolas' decision to leave his law practice and take over the family wine estate. In 1818 he founded the house of Billecart-Salmon which now stands as the oldest continuously family owned and operated house in Champagne. It is currently managed by the seventh generation, brothers Francois and Antoine Roland-Billecart. The cellars are in the hands of renowned "chef de cave" Francois Domi.



Billecart-Salmon owns a total of 15 hectares of vineyards. Eleven of these are in the Vallee de la Marne split between 4ha of Grand Cru in Ay and Premier Cru in Mareuil-sur-Ay and 7ha in the village of Damery. In the Cote des Blancs the family owns 4ha of Grand Cru vineyards in the villages of Chouilly, Avize and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. With respect to harvest one of the most distinctive aspects of Billecart-Salmon is their philosophy that an early harvest yields more elegant and delicate champagnes. They look for a strong acid structure rather than alcohol as a preservative and therefore, never harvest at higher than 10 degrees of potential alcohol.

Another defining characteristic of Billecart-Salmon is their practice of double cold settling which they began in 1952. This involves a primary cold settling of the pressed juice for a period of 12 hours whereby the heaviest of the must solids fall to the bottom. The juice is then racked into clean tanks where it is chilled down to 2C for another 48 hours. This second and much colder settling eliminates any wild yeasts and additional heavy elements without the use of enzymes, filtering or a centrifuge. After the second racking, fermentation is initiated by adding dried yeasts and maintained at a long slow pace for up to 5 weeks in order to preserve as many delicate fruit aromas as possible. One varietal that benefits greatly from this is Pinot Meunier which the Billecarts believe is a vital component in world class champagnes. Many producers shy away from Meunier because it is easy to burn off its delicate aromas during fermentation. Malolactic fermentation is allowed to occur but may be blocked in certain years if the vintage conditions warrant it. Since 1987 the family has been making a certain percentage of the wines for their vintage cuvee champagnes in barrel. In these instances malolactic fermentation is always blocked.

CUVÉE NICHOLAS
FRANÇOIS BILLECART

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Varietal/Blend: The original blend of 1937, created by Nicholas François Billecart: 60% Pinot Noir issued by Montagne de Reims, 40% Chardonnay.

Farming: Traditional

Fermentation: The first clarification process (débouillage) is followed by a second chilling of the must, which separates the courser lees. Each parcel, terroir and varietal is then fermented separately before blending. One part is vinified in barriques.

Aging: 9-10 years in the cellar

Soil: Chalky terroir and limestone

The dosage is 8 g/L.

A fine, elegant but rich wine with a lovely freshness on the palate, offering a wide range of aromas.

Country: France

Region: Champagne

Sub Region:

Vineyard: 60% Pinot Noir issued from Montagne de Reims.

Vineyard Size: