

# EGLY-OURIET

Ambonnay

Champagne may have enjoyed its status as a fashionable libation for longer than any other wine on earth, but that will neither preserve it from the usual scourges of over-production in the vineyards and lackluster winemaking in the cellar, nor will it guarantee that the best wines will *sell*.

Quite the contrary, fame can breed greed in the vineyards and laziness in the cellars, which spells mediocrity in the bottle. Further-more, Champagne is sold as a celebratory beverage. Consumers seldom extend to what is potentially one of the world's greatest wines the simple courtesy of considering it *as wine*. Finally, and most germane to our purposes, is that Champagne is too often about what folks want to *be seen* drinking. And what one sees is *the label*. The market is utterly dominated by its brands.

Be that as it may, a few brave souls have been beating the drum on behalf of *growers* who bottle much of the best Champagne. Not that there aren't terrific as well as lackluster "Grande Marque" Champagnes from the large, powerful negotiant houses. But, as with other wine regions, much of the best stuff is from small estate-bottlers.

There's another consideration when it comes to Champagne. An estate-bottler, unlike the "Grande Marque" typically works with vineyards in and around his or her home town. Champagne of one terroir, of one grape, or from one vintage, might seem something of an exercise in working with one hand tied behind one's back. But the fact is, one terroir and one dominant grape, if they are great ones and in the right hands, is quite enough for profound wine. Witness Burgundy!

Ambonnay is a Pinot-dominated town. Its fracturous chalk in excellent exposure offers red fruit and mouthcoating minerality. Francis Egly aims first to produce complex *wine* reflecting this terroir. "The heart of the cuvée is assembled just after harvest," he relates, with Pinot and Chardonnay usually fermenting together. Gentle pressing, barrel-fermentation of some lots, long lees contact, unfiltered bottling, and disgorgement after four years or more are all part of the Egly regime.



Sure, you can read what the wine pundits on both sides of the proverbial Puddle say about this house (see below). But why don't you just taste for yourself and then commit the energy needed to insist that your customers experience something extraordinary, not just when a toast is called for, but as one of the world's greatest and most adaptable wines and one which, quite frankly, is something of a bargain?

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"It has been a pleasure to follow the evolution of this domain ... from anonymity to worldwide notoriety. More than any other estate, it draws on the magnificent terroir of Ambonnay to obtain Pinot of ripeness and harmony, endowing them with fullness and grace unsurpassed in Champagne."

- Michel Bettane, *Le Classement 98*

"It was only recently that I discovered and began extolling the wines of Egly-Ouriet. I realize that the large Champagne firms dominate Champagne sales in this country, but one of the most encouraging trends is that small, high-quality estate bottlers are now beginning to receive some representation.

Egly-Ouriet's Champagnes are so good that I have begun buying them to drink *chez moi*. ... Given the intensity of these exquisite wines, they should be drunk with food rather than served as an aperitif."

Robert Parker, *The Wine Advocate*

[#107; 10/96]

"... marvelous fruit and a miraculously precise expression of terroir worthily justifies the reputation of this domain."

*la revue du vin de France* 11/98

"But you *must* try Egly-Ouriet ... long a meticulous house making top-notch Champagne."

Jacqueline Friedrich, *Quart Rev Wines*, 7/00

Champagne

Varieties: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay  
Vineyards: 7 hectare in Ambonnay, a village with a so-called 100% rating, meaning they fetch the maximum price for grapes and are entitled to the designation "Grand Cru" on the bottles.

Vinificatory details: Varying degrees of barrel-fermentation and beating of the lees, depending on cuvée. Bottled unfiltered. Long stay on lees prior to disgorgement.

## Brut Tradition

Elegant and as light as Egly-Ouriet gets, but packed with real red fruit and meat of (75%) Pinot Noir together with cool, chalky, perfumed Chardonnay. Based on vintages „98-„(50%) 01, its current incarnation was disgorged after 3+ years.

## Brut "Les Vignes de Vigny"

From Egly's wife's family's properties just west of Reims, this 100% Meunier, 100% 80% „01 from old vines in an exceptional site reputed last to raves in France and you'll taste why! 3+ yrs. on the lees.

## Brut Rosé

60:40 Pinot:Chard. 60% 01.

## Blanc de Noirs "Les Crayères" V.V.

Meaty, complex Pinot from ancient vines. In all of Champagne, only the legendary Bollinger *Vielle Vignes Francaises* is remotely like this wine! Always from one vintage (currently 99) „though not labeled as such. Barrel-fermented 4+ years on lees.

## Brut Millésimes

His 70:30 blend from a great 1996 vintage - late disgorged - is the most rivetingly complex wine Francis Egly has ever disgorged!