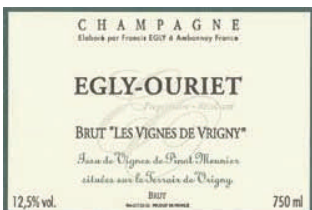


EGLY-OURIET

Ambonnay



Francis Egly



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France

CHAMPAGNE Montagne de Reims

OVERVIEW

Among well-known estates in Champagne, including the producers-formerly-known-as “Grandes Marques,” Egly-Ouriet enjoys special renown. This long-time grower has only been estate-bottling champagne since the 1950s when Charles Egly bottled 100 cases a year for family and friends. His son Michel expanded this to 1,600 cases, but when Francis Egly took over in 1982, he became a committed *récoltant manipulateur* (grower-producer) and electrified the category with sensational wines that were sinewy yet lithe, and were as delicious as *vin clair* as they were with bubbles. Part of the reason for this is that Egly’s vinification approach is unusual, but as he says, “In the past, the best vintages of Champagne are those with a high degree of maturity.” You’re right if you inferred that he means most champagnes are made from fruit that isn’t fully-ripened (which sounds bad, but in the case of champagne it isn’t), because most producers fear a loss of acidity. The potential alcohol in the grapes for Egly’s wines routinely reaches 12% to 13% (rather than the more traditional 11%) with no deleterious effects on the final product. Indeed, these are among the world’s finest champagnes.

Varieties: Chardonnay, Meunier, Pinot Noir

Total Acreage: 29 acres (24 in the Grand Crus Ambonnay, Bouzy, Verzenay, 5 in 1^{er} Cru Vrigny)

Average Production: 8,000 cases

VINEYARD/CELLAR PRACTICES

- Emphasis on fully-ripe fruit (uncommon regionally) from low-yielding old vines
- varieties co-fermented with indigenous yeasts, up to 50% in barrel for up to 8 months
- Bottled without clarification with very low dosage, aged on the lees for at least three years before disgorgement

WINES

Brut Tradition

A ripe and bold wine (70% PN and 30% Chard), about ¼ of which is barrel fermented. Spews red fruits and orange-scented chocolate through an amazingly willowy frame.

Les Vignes de Vrigny Brut

There’s never enough of this beauty—100% old vine Meunier from just west of Reims. Delicate but still quite voluminous, it’s fruitier than the Brut Tradition but gets a lower dosage!

V.P. (Vieillessement Prolongé) Extra Brut

An extraordinary wine that undergoes prolonged aging on the lees (70 months), it’s harmony and grace are hard to fathom. This magical wine’s silky expansion is a revelation in über-dry champagne—its dosage is usually under 3 g/L, depending upon the vintage.

Blanc de Noirs Brut Les Crayères Vieilles Vignes

A plus-sized wine, usually quite tensile in its youth, but at its core is a spectacular array of mysterious fruits bound by a chalky minerality. It steadily gains more depth & complexity as it matures (or sits in a glass). Always a single-vintage wine, though not labeled as such.

Brut Millésime Vieilles Vignes

A bold statement of Ambonnay, this cuvée is a grand rendering of Egly’s home village fruit. Extroverted ripe flavors of red and white fruits, it bears more than a little resemblance to Meursault, especially in its firm, indescribably harmonious saline finish.

Ambonnay Rouge Côteaux Champenois Cuvée des Grands Côtés

Dark, virile, and concentrated, its rich black fruits are intertwined with a smoky, flinty sense of stoniness. More red Burgundies should have this sort of vivid depth & density of aroma on the palate, constantly driven by that intense minerality. Amazing Pinot Noir.

ACCOLADES

Brut Tradition Its fruit flavors are ripe and bold, showing predictable red fruit notes but also veering towards pineapple and candied citrus aromas, marked by the sappy, concentrated character of the vintage. For all of its intensity of flavor it remains surprisingly light on its feet, kept buoyant by a sleekly racy structure and a saline chalkiness.

Peter Liem, ChampagneGuide.net