



Wiston Blanc de Blanc NV (Non-Vintage), Traditional Method, West Sussex, England

Introduction:

The beautiful family-run Wiston Estate is nestled in the heart of England's rolling South Downs in West Sussex. The Wiston Estate vineyard lies on an exceptional, south-facing chalk escarpment similar to Champagne, and planted with the classic grape varieties Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

Employing time-honoured methods Wiston produces vintage sparkling wines of exceptional finesse and quality. 2014 saw the launch of their first non-vintage sparkling wine, Wiston Brut NV, which winemaker Dermot Sugrue had been working on since 2009 and this was soon followed in 2015 by Wiston Blanc de Blancs NV.

Background:

Wiston Estate has been in the hands of the Goring family since 1743 and is presided over today by Harry and Pip Goring. The estate is managed by their son Richard and both he and his wife, Kirsty, are now involved in the day to day running of the vineyard and winery. It was Pip's long-held conviction that the estate held the potential to grow high quality grapes. The 16-acre vineyard, planted in 2006, was the fruit of her dream and tenacity. Wiston Estate is a family venture, small in scale, impressive in aspiration and unrelenting in pursuit of quality. Under the aegis of award-winning winemaker Dermot Sugrue, the tight-knit team spares no effort in the vineyard or winery.

As part of a larger agricultural estate with the utmost respect for nature, Wiston's vineyard is run according to a strict philosophy of sustainability. The team's pioneering efforts include the installation of solar panels at the winery as a source of renewable energy. Similarly their use of a Boisselet cultivator allows them to manage root and weed growth by returning them gently to the soil, rather than resorting to 'quick fix' chemical herbicides and synthetic fertilisers.

The vineyard is planted on an escarpment of pure chalk, similar to the renowned *Côte des Blancs* in Champagne. Wiston Estate's vintage wines are picked by hand and gently pressed in England's only traditional Coquard press, one of the few outside France's Champagne region. The tiny yields (15 hl per hectare) are critical to Wiston Estate's purity, focus and elegance, and creating a new benchmark for English sparkling wine.

Vineyard Information

Location: South Downs, West Sussex. A natural sun-trap, and protected from prevailing winds, the south-facing vineyard slope benefits from maximum sun exposure, promoting ripening.

Climate: Moderate rainfall, cool winters and temperate summers couple with cool breezes from the south coast, allowing the grapes to ripen slowly but fully and retain the crucial acidity and freshness vital for the production of high-quality sparkling wine.

Soils: Wiston's vineyard sits on an ancient chalk seam covered by a shallow layer (10-30 cm) of topsoil, an ideal growing medium. As in so many areas producing wines of outstanding quality, it is this chalky soil that is held to impart the complex flavours and structural elegance to the grapes and the wine itself.

Philosophy: Wiston Estate believes in sustainable viticulture, using natural methods to optimise health and balance in the vineyard. The vines require careful tending by hand, one by one, to ensure that the leaf canopy is optimised.

Harvest: carried out by hand by a team of skilled pickers, over 2 weeks usually mid-late October.

Winemaking Details

Grape varieties: 100% Chardonnay

Pressing: The grape varieties are pressed separately and in whole bunches using a traditional, gentle Coquard basket press – as used in the Champagne region - to preserve the delicate fruit flavours and aromas in the juice. The current Blanc de Blancs NV is largely from grapes harvested and pressed in 2014 with reserves from 2009 and 2013.

Fermentation and maturation process: The juice was fermented entirely in stainless steel tanks. Each component of the final assemblage wine went through malolactic fermentation and was allowed to rest on its lees prior to bottling in 2015.

After blending, cold stabilisation and bottling (*tirage*), the wine underwent a slow secondary fermentation and was then kept on its side, under crown cap (*sur lattes*) at cool 9-11 degree temperatures for 2 years, while it matured and took on flavour and structure through the process of autolysis. Autolysis is one of the crucial processes in the production of high quality sparkling wines, imparting a unique combination of complex flavours and textural finesse (it is worth noting that Champagne must spend only 15 months on its lees). The bottles were riddled and disgorged at the end of 2016. To preserve the wine's natural poise and balance a dosage of 9g/l was required to complete the wine.

Tasting Notes

An elegant and complete sparkling wine showing great finesse and a long finish. A perfect wine to pair with any seafood as its clean fresh acidity cuts through and complements the richness.

"The NV Blanc de Blancs has a superb bouquet: vibrant and quite stony with plenty of dew-speckled Granny Smith apples. The palate is very crisp with superb tension, fleet of foot with a brisk, racy citrus-driven finish. What a thrilling, live-wire sparkling Chardonnay from Wiston. You almost crave to sip this by the sea with a huge plate of freshly shucked oysters." **Neal Martin, The Wine Advocate** June 2017

"Powdery, sweet-edged, elegant, toasty, pretty scents with a softer, more rounded palate than its Wiston peers, though there's plenty of stony refinement here, too, and a mouth-watering, vinous finish." **Andrew Jefford, Decanter** September 2016

"Delicious palate, the depth of the orangey flavour, the crisp, taut grapefruity acidity and the core of bright apple, all brimming with finesse, elegance too in the fine and persistent mousse. 91-92/100" **Tom Cannavan**

Awards

Gold Medal from The Independent English Wine Awards 2018 (IEWA)