

PRODUCER PROFILE

# Wiston Estate Winery

By Amanda Menahem



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And with her, the striking and vivacious Pip, the matriarch of the family and the visionary behind the success of the vineyard. It was Pip who finally persuaded her husband Harry to plant the vineyard back in 2006, having first conceived the idea some 40 years earlier - a result of feeling homesick for the rolling vineyards of her native South Africa.

Today its 6000 acres lie on the chalky slopes of the South Downs, the vines themselves covering 16 acres on south-facing slopes with 'terroir' almost identical to the renowned Cote Des Blancs in Champagne.

After planting the vines in 2006 the family still needed to actually make the wine. With no funds and no premises, they decided to approach the established nearby winery Nyetimber, who agreed to make their wine for them, lead by head wine maker Dermot Sugrue. Dermot soon joined the Wiston team. He set about finding a suitable wine making location (an old converted turkey farm) and scoured Europe for the right equipment. And so the winery was built.

Luckily both Dermot and Pip share the same core values; organic principles, respecting nature, minimal processing, staying small, being authentic, doing what feels right rather than chasing profit.

These principles embody the entire production process. Dermot sourced a rare 'coquard press', the only one of its kind in the UK. This ancient wooden mechanical press uses gravity to enable the grapes to be pressed very gently resulting in a cleaner, fresher end product. There are no herbicides or chemicals used (unusually) and no intervention in processing or filtration- the wine simply 'does its thing'.

This is not to say that the end product is totally left to fate (though one vintage did result in an accidental, and delicious, Rose!). No, they take great care in deciding how long to mature the wine, what type of barrel to use, and so on. Such care over every element also extends to the branding, which takes its

recognisable and distinctive colour scheme from Pip's favourite scarf. The garland like decoration that encircles the label is a copy of the decorative features to be found in the ceilings of the old family home Wiston House.

**So what about the wine itself?**

There are four non-vintages.

The brut is the classic 3/3/3 blend of all three grapes, the Rosé, a blanc de blanc (100% chardonnay) and a blanc de Noir (Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier).

The vintage wines are the Wiston Cuvée 2010 and the Rosé 2011, winner of 5 gold awards. These wines attract numerous critical acclaim. The vintage Blancs de blanc 2010 won Gold at Sommelier Wine Award 2015 and Gold in the Drinks Business Global Masters 2014 and most recently Gold at IWC 2016. The Blancs de blanc non vintage won Gold and Best in Class at The Champagne & Sparkling Wine World Championships 2014. Of the Wiston 2011 Rosé, Jane MacQuitty of the Times said "Another Dermot Sugrue triumph, this delicious, smoky, savoury, barrel-fermented rose oozes elegant sour cherry and raspberry class."

I was treated to a first taste of as yet unreleased wines; a 2011 Pinot Noir dominated vintage, which will be released just before Christmas, and a 2009 Brut Cuvée. Both were excellent. The blanc-de-blanc and 2010

Cuvée will appeal to those who like their bubbles crisp and fruity and very dry. I adore the blanc de noir and Rosé (both the NV and the 2011), as I like the complexity and structure of these wines.

Wiston's wines can be found in a handful of local restaurants (including the Leconfield and the Chiltern Firehouse in London - both reviewed in this magazine and available on my own website PeoplePlacesFood.co.uk). Stockists include Corney and Barrow, Ten Green Bottles and Butlers in Brighton to name but a few. And you can also buy directly from the website.

I found the family members I met to be extremely passionate, friendly, warm, welcoming and generous with their time. They plan to create a more customer-friendly space for wine tasting and food, more akin to the offerings at wineries in Pip's native South Africa and the Napa Valley. Given their natural gift for hospitality, this will be a success. I for one will be a regular.



Their award-winning Rosé wine

The funky, modern branding of Wiston Estate Winery caught my eye long ago, and being a sucker for bubbles, I was destined to become a fan.

I don't like any old bubbles, however (I dislike many big brand Champagnes and as for Prosecco, well I just don't get the craze when Cava is so much better). I first experienced Wiston sparkling wine aboard a gourmet bus

tour of the region over a year ago. It was a highlight. Since then, their wines have received numerous accolades and rave reviews from the likes of wine legend Jancis Robinson. And now me. I had a highly enjoyable afternoon with wonderful people.

I was greeted warmly by the charming Kirsty, a member of Goring family who have owned the entire Wiston Estate since 1743.

