

Champagne Barnaut Bouzy



We appreciate the strength of the Barnaut Pinot Noirs which make possible vinous cuvées of beautiful maturity and energy.

--Bettane & Desseauve, Guide to Wines 2016

Edmond Barnaut was one of the first pioneers in Champagne to create his own brand outside of the controlling centers-of-power of Epernay and Reims. In 1874 he set up shop in Bouzy, where he owned vines and where he married Appoline Godmé- Barancourt (now there's a name!), heiress to additional vineyards in the village. Cellars were dug as deep as 15 meters underground, and the first cuvée made of two-thirds Pinot Noir and one-third Chardonnay was launched.

And it's still made today, under the Grande Réserve label, with its reserve wine coming from a perpetual cuvée begun by Edmond himself and maintained through five generations of Barnaut descendants.

Philippe Secondé is the current descendant and arguably one of the more important ones. He took over in 1985 and soon made a name for himself with his vinous Blanc de Noirs and his strikingly flavorful rosé. He significantly increased the domain's vineyards, modernized its cellar, expanded production, and moved its viticulture footing to the quasi-organic *lutte raisonnée* structure (plowing between rows, using only organic composts, and minimalizing fungicide applications). Today Champagne Barnaut farms 11.27 hectares (28 acres) divided among 32 parcels in the grand cru vineyards of Bouzy, Ambonnay and Louvois. The latter two communes are adjacent to Bouzy and Barnaut's holdings in them represent 5% of the domain's grand cru totals. In addition, the domain farms 4.6 hectares (11 acres) in the Marne Valley and sells those grapes to the cooperative that makes the Nicolas Feuillatte brand, while saving some Chardonnay to make a Blanc de Blancs.

Pinot Noir makes up a solid 80% of Barnaut's production, with Chardonnay making up the rest. All fruit is selected on a sorting table. All the cuvées of wine undergo malolactic fermentation in stainless steel, and fifty percent of each year's crop is saved as reserve wine. The white non-vintage wines spend at least 24 months on the lees before being disgorged, and rest for another three months before going to market. The vintage spends up to seven years on the lees, is made only in the best years, and represents only 3% of Philippe's total production. From the beginning, he never wanted to take quality away from his NV wines.

With its sister village of Ambonnay, Bouzy lays claim to having the finest vineyard sites for Pinot Noir in the appellation of Champagne. Bouzy's vineyards begin at 103 meters above sea level and end at 268 meters. Its 923 acres of vines grow up the rolling foothills of the *Montagne de Reims* and face due south, ensuring the best possibility for ripening every year (Ambonnay's vineyards, following the mountain, begin the turn to the southeast, thus on paper anyway have the potential for more elegance). The result is Champagne's richest and fullest-bodied wines—the Latin counterpart to the Côte des Blancs' Nordic austerity, if you will.

The Grandes Marques own nearly one-third of this grand cru commune's vineyards. Barnaut's annual production is roughly 8,300 12-pack cases.