



The Wines

- *Crémant d'Alsace*: The appellation rules for this wine were promulgated in 1976, and Mélanie's father started making crémant in the early 1980s. From the first, he started with a long aging period. Today, the Pfisters well understand this wine and consistently make an unusually elegant, perfumed, top end sparkling wine. This is a blend of roughly half Chardonnay and a quarter each of Pinot Blanc and Auxerrois (the back label states half Chardonnay and half Pinot Blanc because the latter is commonly assembled with Auxerrois in Alsace.). The wine rests on its lees for a minimum of twenty-four months (bear in mind that most French crémant, regardless of origin, ages on its lees for a mere nine months or so). Depending on what bottling you have—there are between three and four disgorgements of a given year's crémant—what you're drinking could have aged as long as thirty-six months on its lees. This is a single-vintage wine without any older reserve wine, but the vintage is kept discreetly on the back label rather than printed on the front because of the multiple disgorgements. The final sentence in the back label text gives the exact number of months of aging on the lees. Production averages 800 cases annually; dosage is 3-4 grams per liter, making this an extra brut.
- *Pinot Blanc*: The vineyard surface is 2.4 hectares, or six acres, essentially split between Pinot Blanc and Pinot Auxerrois. Some is reserved for the sparkling wine, but most goes into this still bottling. Pinot Blanc gives perfume and length, while Auxerrois gives fat and spice. Most of the current crop of vines was planted in 1973 and '74, with a small section dating from the late '60s, and all grow in predominately clay soils. Annual production averages 500 cases.
- *Cuvée 8*: This is Mélanie's creation; a blend of Riesling, Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer, and Muscat, in that order—but every year the percentages vary according to what variety does best. In that sense, the wine is intended to reflect the best of a given year. It is also intended to proclaim *Alsace!* in spades. The varieties are picked separately and fermented individually before being blended. Save for the Muscat, all come from the Silberberg terroir. Annual production averages 500 cases.
- *Riesling Tradition*: Prior to 2011, this was labeled *Riesling Silberberg*. The vineyard source hasn't changed, but the administrative burden has—lieux-dits require more paperwork. Thus the wine has been renamed Tradition, but it remains a delectable wine, born of the same place, a wine with full, earthy stone fruit and dry, crisp length rising altogether above its "entry" class. The Silberberg hillsides are a variation of France's famous *argile-calcaire* mix, or clay-limestone mix. Here, the clay gives Riesling body while the calcareous limestone gives finesse, focus, and length. Riesling from this terroir differs from Riesling growing in Alsace's granitic soils or pink sandstone (*grès*) soils by virtue of its structured ability (and need) to age. Unlike clay, granite and sandstone-based soils drain quickly, and its wine tends to be expressive right out of the gate. The Pfisters farm six plots of Riesling here, totaling 1.29 hectares, or 3.18 acres of vines. Annual production averages 900 cases.
- *Riesling Grand Cru Engelberg*: Engelberg means Angel's Hill. This was the south-facing hillside vineyard that was written about in 884 and praised for its fine wine. The hillside's topsoil is very thin and marly, sitting on a mound of hard limestone mother rock into whose cracks the vines root. The purity of this limestone was such that a quarry was established in the middle of the slope and produced lime into the 20th century. The vineyard was granted Grand Cru status in 1985, and the Pfisters farm 0.77 hectares of Riesling here, or just under two acres of vines all located in the prime mid-slope zone of this exceptional grand cru. Annual production averages 300 cases.

- *Gewurztraminer Tradition:* Two parcels, three acres total, all in the lieu-dit of Silberberg (see Riesling Tradition above for more on Silberberg). This is made in tank with a long aging on the lees and typically bottled in August before the harvest--but if the wine needs more time, it's given more time, for there is space in the cellar to do this. The terroir here is based on limestone, making for an elegant, dry style of Gewurztraminer in contrast to the more often found big bruiser Gewurzt. Production averages 200-400 cases.
- *Pinot Gris Tradition:* Of all the wines listed on this page, this is the richest in terms of sweetness, but the impression is one of concentration and elegance—a Pfister hallmark—rather than sweetness. This comes from 1.32 hectares, or 3.26 acres of vines, growing on a steep hillside with relatively rich, deep soil. Annual production averages 750 cases.
- *Pinot Noir:* This comes from a small parcel of less than two acres planted in 1980 with *sélection massale* cuttings. The vines are hand-harvested early in the morning, the fermentations normally are spontaneous, and aging is done in steel. Mélanie looks for fresh, juicy, supple Pinot Noir here with this classic cuvée (there is a reserve Pinot aged in barrel). On average, 250 cases are made yearly.