

Champagne J-M Sélèque Pierry



The Wines

- *Solesence 7 Villages*: Note that with the 2015 base vintage, Jean-Marc changed labels and appended 7 Villages to the cuvée name. Solesence represents nearly half of the total house production, coming in at some 2,500 cases. It also roughly mirrors the house plantations, originating in all seven communes where Jean-Marc grows vines and being a blend based on Chardonnay, then Meunier, followed by Pinot Noir. The grapes for this wine come from the domain's younger vines, which average 35 years of age (that, it must be said, would constitute the old vine selection for most Champagne properties!) Half the blend comes from a perpetual reserve, so-named because half of this older wine goes into the blending tank with the new harvest, and then half of that new blend is returned to the 20-hectoliter *foudre* to replenish the perpetual reserve. The new wine is made in steel and ages on its lees for 20 months with an aim to emphasize freshness. The lot number on the back label is the base vintage.
- *Solesence Nature 7 Villages*: This is the same wine as Solesence NV but aged for three more years for a total of five years on its lees, and it's bottled with zero dosage. Jean-Marc makes this for shellfish, seafood, and sushi. The aromatics are provocative, the body is broad and creamy, and the finish is decidedly dry. The lot number on the back is the vintage. Production averages 325 cases.
- *Solesence Rosé 7 Villages*: An unusually complex rosé made with a blend of reds--Meunier macerated over two days and Pinot Noir from red wine--blended into the Solesence cuvée along with 40% reserve wine. The lot number is the base vintage. Production averages 600 cases.
- *Quintette 5 Terroirs*: Jean-Marc's only blanc de blancs, from five mature plantations in the Marne Valley, the Côte des Blancs, and Pierry. Approximately half the wine is raised in steel with natural malolactic fermentation, and half is raised in older barrels without ML. The cold stabilization is completed naturally, and there is neither fining nor filtration. In July, after a long, gentle aging following the harvest, the wine is blended with 20-30% Chardonnay from a solera (unlike the perpetual cuvée, the solera is replenished strictly with the new harvest) and goes into bottle to rest on its lees until it is disgorged. The lot number on the back is the base vintage. Annual production averages 325 cases.
- *Soliste Meunier Vintage*: This comes from a Pierry premier cru hillside vineyard named Les Gouttes d'Or planted with *selection massale* in 1951. The topsoil is an ochre clay with significant flint deposits on top of the Campanian chalk, elevations are in the lower-slope range of 100-110 meters, and the parcel is plowed by horse. This may be Jean-Marc's finest parcel of Meunier.

Half the wine is raised in concrete egg with natural malolactic fermentation, and half is raised in older barrels without ML. The cold stabilization is completed naturally, and there is neither fining nor filtration. The wine is bottled with cork and aged on its lees for a minimum of 36 months before disgorgement. The lot number on the back is the base vintage. Annual production averages 150 cases.

- *Soliste Infusion Meunier Vintage*: This is all Pinot Meunier from a parcel of Les Charmiers located just under the forest at the upper end of the slope in the premier cru commune of Pierry. These *sélections massales* vines were planted in 1964; the grapes macerated on their skins for two days and aged in older barrels. Here you have a rosé that does exceedingly well at the table. The lot number on the back is the vintage. Production is 200 cases a year.
- *Cuvée Partition*: Music is central in the Sélèque family; Jean-Marc grew up playing guitar while his father continues to play piano. The treble clef on the Partition label is indeed inverted—to make the S of the family name. With each vintage, the score on the label changes to a different song to reflect something that happened that year. Millésime 2012, for example, has Jimi Hendrix's *Changes*, because Jean-Marc instituted a series of changes in how he worked that year.

Partition is Jean-Marc's creation. Seven barrels from seven vineyard sites, always the same sites each year. *Les Frileux* in Epernay gives Chardonnay; *Maque-Bouteille* in Dizy gives Chardonnay; *La Justice* in Vertus gives Chardonnay; *Basses Ronces* in Mardeuil gives Chardonnay; *Les Porgeons*, *Les Gouttes d'Or*, and *Les Gayères* in Pierry give, respectively, Chardonnay, Meunier, and Pinot Noir. The blend is dominated by Chardonnay, with Meunier and Pinot Noir (specifics for a given year are on the back label).

Ageing on the lees is for four to five years. Significantly, beginning with the 2010 vintage, this ageing is done *tirage sur liege*, or in bottle with a cork closure rather than with the typical beer cap closure (Jacquesson also ages on cork). A cork allows more of an exchange of oxygen in the beginning before the secondary fermentation begins, but once that begins and the pressure builds up within a bottle, a cork becomes less permeable than a cap. In Jean-Marc's words: "This is something important for me, to continue the winemaking with oxygen inside the bottle. It results that the wine with cap is bright and fresh, chiseled and straight when young (24 to 36 months) and gets more evolved after 4 years. But the wine with cork is rich, textured, more complex with a soft bubble, and keeps its freshness longer in the cellar. Though it is a hard and long job to bottle with cork and also to disgorge, because you have to taste the foam of each bottle to see if there is any cork taint."

Partition is bottled without fining or filtration. Production is 125 cases.