



Wiston Estate Cuvée 2015, Traditional Method, West Sussex, England

Introduction

Nestled in the heart of England's rolling South Downs in West Sussex, the beautiful 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 belief that the estate held the potential to grow high quality grapes and in 2006 her dream came to fruition when Wiston's 6.5ha vineyard was planted on a south/south-east-facing escarpment of pure chalk, like the renowned *Côte des Blancs* in Champagne. Under the guidance of winemaker Dermot Sugrue with a strict philosophy of sustainability, the tight-knit team produces award-winning sparkling wines of exceptional purity and finesse from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

2015 Vintage

The 2015 growing season began positively with a warm, frost-free period encouraging bud burst. Temperatures cooled for the remainder of the Spring but re-warmed in time for flowering in July (albeit two weeks later than normal). As a result, the yield for the year looked set to be good. A cool summer, characterised by untypically cold nights, meant grapes were slow to develop, with veraison much later than normal. However, September improved significantly ending the month with a relative heatwave that continued into October. Harvest began on the 22nd October and finished on the 3rd of November. October's warm, dry weather conditions resulted in a small to medium crop of exceptionally ripe, and healthy grapes. The year is one of concentration of flavour, producing broad wines with impressive ability to age.

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 to produce 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 for vines. 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: 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 efforts include the installation of solar panels at the winery as a source of renewable energy. Natural methods are used in the vineyard to optimise health and balance; the vines require careful tending by hand, one by one, to ensure that the leaf canopy is optimised. A Boisselet cultivator allows us to manage root and weed growth by returning them gently to the soil, rather than resorting to 'quick fix' chemical herbicides and synthetic fertilisers.

Harvest: The tiny yields (15 hl per hectare) are critical to Wiston Estate's purity, focus and elegance. The 2015 harvest was carried out by hand over 2 weeks by a team of skilled pickers in late October and early November.

Winemaking Details

Grape varieties: 45% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay, 22% Pinot Meunier

Pressing: The grape varieties were pressed separately using a traditional, gentle Coquard basket press – as used in the Champagne region - to preserve the delicate fruit flavours and aromas in the juice. They are picked by hand and pressed as whole bunches.

Fermentation & maturation process: The juice from each of the grape varieties was fermented separately in a mixture of old Burgundy barrels (average 10-years) with selected yeasts. Barrels are used to promote a gentle micro-oxygenation process, refining the mouthfeel and structure of the wine; there is no oak flavour imparted to the wine, due to the age of the barrels. The wine is rested on its lees for several months until springtime, bringing additional complexity of structure. The Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier were then blended together and yeast added (*liqueur de tirage*) for the secondary fermentation in bottle. Bottling took place in July 2016.

Ageing & disgorging: The wine underwent a slow secondary fermentation and was kept on its side, under crown cap (*sur lies/lattes*) at a cool 11 degree temperatures for initially 3 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.

Time spent on lees is arguably the most important factor in determining quality. The bottles were riddled, then the first disgorgement took place in May 2019. To preserve the wine's natural poise and balance, dosage was restrained, with only 8g/l required to complete the wine. A further 8 months ageing on cork took place prior to release in January 2020 to allow the flavours to marry.

Tasting Note

Refreshing and fine, with fragrant notes of an English Orchard, nectarines, honey and brioche, Wiston Estate Cuvée 2015 displays an opulent expression of Wiston's Cuvée style. With impressive depth, its filigree texture retains Wiston's signature precision and elegance, that gives more than a nod to French bone structure. A beautifully focused wine with fantastic potential to age, comprising a blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay and 22% Pinot Meunier.

"Bravo to Wiston (and all the other producers who do it) for putting the disgorgement date and dosage on the back label. Golden colour. Fine sparse bead but very tight and sharp. Very toasty nose. The barrel ageing has made a huge impact on this wine, nose and palate. It's rich and spicy, deeply golden in flavour, grilled brioche, golden peaches, satsumas and saffron. It rolls across the tongue like trumpet and drum, silvery notes slipping through old gold, intent, piercing. A very, very sophisticated sparkling wine. Good Value Drink 2020 – 2027." Tamlyn Currin, Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com 9th April 2020

"...the flavour of the Cuvée Brut 2015 is fresh, alive, sophisticated. What I love about writing about sparkling wine is trying to describe it, especially this one with a lovely balance dosage of 8g (between champagne's brut and extra brut). Yes, there is "English Orchard, nectarines, honey and brioche" as the Wiston Estate website says of the Cuvée 2015. With 45% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay and 22% Pinot Meunier, this has a lingering crispness with a honeyed undertone. This and the Cuvée Brut NV are my go-to if you want an English sparkling wine that makes you say, "Where's my credit card? I need more of this." It's a bottle you feel smart for buying and luckier to drink it." Karen Krizanovich, Civilian Global April 2020

*"Made from 45% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay and 22% Pinot Meunier and fermented in a mixture of old Burgundy barrels, it remained on its lees for three years and was treated to only 8g/l dosage. Released in January this year, this is a pivotal wine for Wiston and I am certain that it will shock anyone who tastes it. Drinking now, it will age gracefully for five to eight years, too. I urge anyone who reads this note to track this wine down because I hope that you will see in this wine what I do. It is genuinely impressive."***Matthew**

Jukes, MatthewJukes.com 15th April 2020

*"Enticing nose - pear, green gage, verveine creme fraiche, pastry....complex! Palate shows pastry and creamy notes – tarte tropezienne! Toasty, hints of wild strawberry, salted lemons, ginger, delicious depth and breadth. Balanced and long."***WineGB Awards 2020**

"Intensely spicy and oaky, very full on but showing good depth of spiced red apple and cream. Richly textured and creamy." Highly Recommended **[Decanter Magazine](#) December 2019**

*"This 100% oak-fermented wine is an intense, bold creation with flashes of spicy butter, roasted peaches, pears and redcurrant. This honey-nut richness and oxidative breadth is coming through already here, staked down by forceful acidity and a complex, dry finish."***Tom Hewson, [SixAtmospheres](#) December 2019**

Awards

- Gold Medal in the WineGB Awards 2020