



Wiston Estate Blanc de Blancs 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 by a team of skilled pickers in late October and early November.

Winemaking Details

Grape varieties: 100% Chardonnay

Pressing: The grapes were gently pressed in a traditional, gentle Coquard basket press to preserve the delicate fruit flavours and aromas in the juice. They are pressed as whole bunches. Wiston's Coquard is one of only 4 Coquard presses found outside of France's Champagne region and the only one of its kind to be found in England.

Fermentation & maturation process: 50% of the grapes were fermented in stainless steel tanks and 50% in a mixture of old Burgundy barriques with a range of ages using 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 nine months, bringing additional complexity of structure.

Due to the ideal ripeness of the fruit malolactic fermentation was blocked leaving the wine with natural malic 'energy'. This not only brought verve and focus to the final blend but also gives the wine fantastic ageing potential. The wine was cold stabilised and lightly filtered, but not fined, before yeast and nutrients were 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 lattes*) at cool 11-degree temperatures for 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 (it is worth noting that Champagne must spend only 15 months on its lees compared to Wiston's goal of at least 3 years). It was first released in January 2020.

To preserve the wine's natural poise and balance, dosage was restrained, with only 8g/l required to complete the wine (NB: compare this to the standard Champagne 'Brut' dosage: typically 12g/l). A further 3 months' ageing on cork took place prior to release, to allow the flavours to marry.

Tasting Note

Selected from the chalkiest and steepest part of Wiston's vineyard, Blanc de Blancs 2015 is elegant and complex, with notes of tangerine, honeydew melon, honeysuckle and brioche. Aged in 50% mature Burgundy oak barrels and 50% stainless steel, this single vineyard, single vintage, single varietal Blanc de Blancs is perfect for immediate drinking and will also cellar beautifully.

"Wiston's 2015 Blanc de Blancs is one of the finest English sparkling wines that I have encountered... to date. It was picked from October 22 to November 3 after a warm, dry October, the yield 15hl/ha, 50% fermented in stainless steel and 50% in old Burgundy barrels and aged on the lees for nine months. Dosage is 8g/L. This has a fantastic bouquet of bewitching scents of lime, green apple, honeysuckle and slithers of tinned peach, all beautifully defined. The palate does not disappoint, delivering exquisite balance, wonderful focus and a touch of mineralité toward the harmonious finish. Now this is how you make a great Blanc de Blancs." **Neal Martin, Vinous 8th July 2020**

"A new, pure chardonnay, sparkling release from another excellent English estate." Wines of the Week **Victoria Moore, Telegraph 10th April 2020**

"From chalk soils on the South Downs, this is Chardonnay grown on the steepest part of the vineyard. Base wine is half in barrel, half stainless steel. Dosage is 8 g/l, disgorged in September 2019. This is linear and fine, with a powerful core of citrus fruit. It's pristine and very linear with high acidity, but this acidity is well integrated. The fruit is so linear and pure with amazing focus. Great concentration to this wine, which is one of England's finest." **Jamie Goode, WineAnorak.com 15th April 2020**

"Rich and broad and voluptuous. Like the creamiest Greek yogurt folded through with the malty, fudgy depth of buckwheat honey. A brush of butterscotch, the savoury nuttiness of toasted buckwheat, but the acidity flashes through this wine with diamond-cut dominance so that, despite the richness, it is fiercely racy. Incredible persistence. Wiston is making very ambitious, serious sparkling wines. Drink 2020 – 2027." **Tamlyn Currin, Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com 9th April 2020**

"A new vintage of Wiston Blanc de Blancs is always something to be celebrated (this is only the third vintage Blanc de Blancs from the Sussex superstars). This carries all the hallmarks of being another Dermot Sugrue classic, incorporating a 50/50 approach to stainless steel and Burgundy oak barrel ageing, to bring structure and texture to the wine.

The nose on the latest Wiston Blanc de Blancs is a little bit tight on release, with pear, clean orchard fruit and a light honeyed note, opening up to suggestions of toasted almond.

The palate on this feels more developed and rounded than the nose suggests. Classic, precise apple and pear flavours and zingy citrus notes that lead to rounded almond nougat richness, make this very welcoming already in youth. It ends on a lengthy, lean, mineral and grapefruit peel finish. This latest Wiston is showing lots of potential already but it is really going to start to sing with a few more years in the bottle." **John Mobbs, GreatBritishWine.com 11th March 2020**

"This is pre-release but showing very well already, with ripe yellow grapefruit and white peach fruit wrapped up in magnolia blossom. There's some richness of dried apple and a lovely springy mousse too, finishing with amazing focus and length. This feels perfectly balanced between the more open, richer oak-led style and something tighter and fresher; in time I'm sure it will live up to previous releases." **Tom Hewson, [Six Atmospheres](http://SixAtmospheres) December 2019**