

CHAMPAGNE VEUVE FOURNY & FILS

At the Fourny brothers', in Vertus, between the old vines and the noble plots, the terroir dictates the tempo and the blending refines the harmony

The terroir in Vertus holds no more secrets for the Fourny brothers. Charles-Henry and Emmanuel have worn out the soles of their shoes there, determined to make the family house stand out across the world. The former stable is now the reception room where importers and wine lovers come in search of generous and distinguished chardonnays. Inherited from their paternal grandfather, developed by their father Roger, the vineyards, totalling almost 10 hectares, in addition to which they purchase extra grapes, illustrate the magic of the chardonnay from the côte des Blancs with its refined style. The old vines, the massal selections, the care given to the vineyard with trials for organic production and biodynamy, have laid the foundations for these delicate wines.

While Charles tirelessly travels the world as ambassador for the house, Emmanuel manages the viticulture and vinification. A pragmatic person, he makes sure he finds the right balance. "We won't sacrifice our grapes just to be trapped by dogma." Even if they have to spray, when necessary, to save the harvest. Because it is crucial to best express the terroir of Vertus that they love so much and know so well. The northern part of the vintage, towards Le Mesnil, is south-east facing and bears a limestone soil on cracked chalk. Whereas the southern part which points towards Bergères-lès-Vertus, east facing, bears deeper soils with fragmented chalk. And moreover, one other feature : In this area you can also find pinot noir ! The substance at their feet, the two brothers must still get the best out of it. "I try to make the greatest wines possible," Emmanuel confided "And my brother shines the spotlight on them." Writing down about the work to which they have committed and explaining the efforts made is important. The duo try hard, as far as they can, to get close to excellence. After having completely taken on the property in



BLANC DE BLANCS BRUT NATURE

« Ce sont les plus vieilles vignes, plantées dans les années 1960, sur Vertus exclusivement au lieu-dit Les Monts Ferrés. Un champagne fin et ciselé, au fruit épuré, qui se transcende sur des huîtres, du crabe, des langoustines car l'iode exulte ! »

1995, they elevated it to the highest step by developing the vineyard and the business, all that without ever impeding the Vertus vintage. The terroir is thus highlighted in each one of their champagnes, from the Grande Réserve to the Clos Faubourg Notre-Dame, their flagship champagne.

Besides, it was this model vintage which oriented the domaine towards plots twenty years ago. The 30 ares, in the family since 1931, largely planted with vines that are almost 70 years old, give a full-bodied chardonnay, grown partly in undergrowth and aged in the cellars for nine years. The same care and attention to detail are given to the other wines from the house, with a view to have "the crunch of fruit and the sparkle of the terroir." For that, Emmanuel has developed his work in the cellar, dividing the quantities of sulphur, ageing the wines on lees without racking, until March, filtering less and less, especially the great vintages and the reserve wines. Once again, the terroir dictates the pace : Vertus has a sunny climate, with very mature grapes that sometimes hinder the malolactic fermentation.

In 2011, the work tool was moved closer to the terroir, with smaller tanks adapted to the plots. "We don't particularly advocate multiplots," Emmanuel indicated "we work on the basis that by blending, this is how we better understand the terroir."

A pragmatic vision nurtured from many years of experience that doesn't exclude vinification in wood and preserving reserve wines in kegs, barrels and tanks. The search for balance and complexity guides the Fourny brothers and this quest has been translated into their tailored blending choices. Also found in their wonderful rosés, particularly Les Rougesmonts, a tapping rosé from pink limestone and clay, originating from a small plot of 22 ares. In line with the house, an airy champagne with a bright freshness. ✦

VÉRONIQUE RAISIN



Emmanuel and Charles-Henry Fourny.