

La Champagne de Sophie Claeys



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Champagne Vve Fourny & Fils: two brothers, the same high standards requirement in Vertus

In Vertus, on the Côte des Blancs, Emmanuel and Charles Fourny have embodied the spirit of Champagne Vve Fourny & Fils for over thirty years. Two brothers united by a simple idea: to craft wines that are sincere, precise, and true to their terroir.

«We took over a much smaller estate around 1994-1995,» recalls Emmanuel. «The vines had been in the family for two generations, and like many estates in the 60s and 70s, we sold wine across France.» Their mother, left alone at 34 to manage the estate, ensured its continuity. «She wasn't in the wine business at all, but she got help from friends in the village. She never pressured us to return, despite the circumstances.»

Yet, both brothers eventually came back. Charles studied business in Bordeaux— «it already touched on wine a bit» —while Emmanuel left medicine for agronomy and oenology. «We were complementary. We each worked on our own for



two years, then decided to give it a try together. Working with your brother isn't always easy, but it worked.»

Two Roles, One Shared Vision

The division of labor is clear: Emmanuel oversees the vineyards and winemaking, while Charles develops the house internationally. «He's our ambassador, representing and explaining our house in many countries since we export 80%. And when he's abroad, he's fully committed,» says Emmanuel.

Over thirty years, production has grown from 40,000 to 300,000 bottles, yet the original spirit remains unchanged. «We've grown, but we've stayed true to the same ideals,» Emmanuel summarizes.

«A Winemakers' House»

«We chose to build a small house in size, but one truly focused on our terroir, which we know well,» he explains. Over 80% of their grapes come from Vertus, with the rest sourced from neighboring villages like Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Oger, and Cramant. «I don't like the word 'supply,' but that's the term: more than 80% of our grapes are from Vertus.»

Around them, about forty partners work with them. «When we started, no one knew us. We had to build trust. Today, many have become friends. I see each of them, one by one, every year.»

Two Faces of Vertus

The brothers also sought to deepen their understanding of their cru. «From 1995 to 2000, we dug many soil pits to see what we could find in Vertus.» Their conclusion? «There are two Vertus in one. The Vertus-Ménil area, facing south-southeast, is very chalky and produces taut, saline Chardonnays. In contrast, the Vertus-Bergères area has deeper, clay-rich soils that yield rounder wines. That's where we find the Pinot Noirs.»

Pragmatic Viticulture

Certified as High Environmental Value (HVE), the house experimented extensively before finding its balance. «I did internships in organic and biodynamic farming in the late 90s. We faced some

failures, so we chose a pragmatic approach to viticulture,» explains Emmanuel. Today, the estate limits herbicide use, works the soil, and practices early leaf thinning. «We were among the first to do this to avoid using products against rot.»

The vines, averaging over 50 years old, are meticulously cared for. «We interplant frequently and preserve our old vines. Every year, we replace 2,000 to 3,000 vines,» they explain.

«The Gift of Time»

In the cellar, the brothers follow the same philosophy. «We keep our wines on the lees until blending. This allows us to avoid sulfur, because the lees naturally protect the wine.» Some of the wines age in 40-hectoliter barrels, «not to dominate the flavor, but to add a touch of texture.» As for their reserve wines, they are stored separately. «We don't want them to overpower the vintage of the year.»

«Harvesting Late, Pursuing Balance»

«We've always harvested our grapes very late,» Emmanuel explains. «We were taught to pick early to preserve freshness, but for us, freshness and salinity are not the same. True salinity only comes when we harvest late, as the salts concentrate in the grapes.»

Their approach to dosage is restrained. «I prefer to

harvest late, allowing for slightly lower acidity and a lighter dosage. A concentrated, saline wine is far superior to one that's merely acidic and hollow.»

«The Cuvées: Reflections of Vertus»

In the Vve Fourny & Fils collection, each wine captures a unique facet of Vertus' terroir. The Brut Nature Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru highlights the crisp freshness of Chardonnay, with no unnecessary dosage. The Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut emphasizes finesse and purity.

For those seeking depth, the Monts de Vertus Extra Brut Premier Cru Vintage reveals the richness of an iconic village parcel. Rosés also play a vital role in this harmonious lineup: the Rosé Premier Cru showcases the lusciousness of Pinot Noir, the Rosé Extra Brut balances elegance, and the Rosé de Saignée Extra Brut delivers intensity.

Finally, the Clos Notre-Dame Extra Brut Premier Cru, from a historic parcel, embodies the delicacy of the cru and the brothers' mastery of parcel-specific winemaking, a defining hallmark of the Fourny philosophy.