

International Wine Review

The Outstanding Low Dosage Champagnes of JM Sélèque

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JM SÉLÈQUE CHAMPAGNE

Founded in 1965 by Henri Sélèque in Pierry, a Premier Cru village in the Coteaux Sud d’Epernay in the Vallée de la Marne, today JM Sélèque is one of the top producers of grower Champagne (récoltant-manipulant). Champagne in Pierry dates from the late 17th century when the Benedictine monk Jean Oudart gained fame for his sparkling wines. Today, Pierry is known for its Meunier, which represents half the total plantings of the village. We tasted a selection of JM Sélèque wines while preparing our upcoming report on Champagne. See the tasting notes below.



Jean-Marc Sélèque

Henri’s son Richard began making his own Champagne in the 1970s. Henri’s grandson Jean-Marc Sélèque has put his mark on this winery since returning from an internship at Chandon in Napa in 2008. His changes in the winery include gentler pressing (PAI Coquard), cooler fermentations, longer aging on the lees and more (40%) aging in oak (increasingly larger format), less malo, minimal fining, reduced SO₂ and lower dosage. In the vineyard, he began farming organically and, since 2010, biodynamically. The domaine has 9 ha of vines in 45 parcels across 7 villages with an average age of 40

years, including several highly regarded vineyards (lieux-dits) like Les Gouttes d'Or, planted in 1951. Reserve wines are aged in a single, 20 hl oak foudre.

Total production (all blends) is about 5500 cases including the Solesence base blends (mostly fermented in stainless steel), the vintage Soliste range, and two special cuvées. Pierry where the winery is located is in Les Côteaux Sud d'Épernay. 2500 cs

US Importer: Vintage '59 Imports

The Wines



Pierry Premier Cru

JM Sélèque NV Quintette Chardonnay Extra Brut Champagne (\$82)

92 Toasted grain and candied lemon zest shown on a very fresh and vibrant nose of this Blanc de Blancs. The very dry palate is richly flavored with nuanced notes of hazelnut shortbread and smoky minerals. All Chardonnay from five different villages (Vertus, Pierry, Épernay, Pierry, Mardeuil and Dizy) from a single vintage blended with 20% solera aged in oak. Aged 3 years on the lees and a dosage 2 g/L; disgorged December 2017.

JM Sélèque NV Solessence Extra Brut Champagne (\$81) 92 Showing a lightly toasted, yeasty nose, this Brut is bright and fresh, evoking orchard fruit with notes of clementine and oyster shells. It has good precision and balance and represents excellent value in grower Champagne. A blend of 50% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier and 10% Pinot Noir sourced from all 7 communes where Jean-Marc grows wines, the grapes for this wine come from vines averaging about 40 years. Half the blend comes from a perpetual, solera style reserve aged in 20 hl foudres. From the 2015 vintage and aged two years on the lees in bottle; dosage 3 g/L. Disgorged July 2018. This is the domaine's basic blend, accounting for about 2500 cases, or almost half its total production.

JM Sélèque NV Solessence Nature Champagne (\$73) 93 An outstanding, complex Brut Nature. Meunier gives this wine a plush mouthfeel lacking in most zero dosage wines. The nose is smoky-toasty with hints of white peach and pastry dough accented by earthy minerals. In the mouth, it's a substantial with striking depth and good persistence. Pairs superbly with pan fried duck breast. This Champagne has 50% reserve wines from the perpetual solera; a blend of 50% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier, and 10% Pinot Noir. Aged 5 years on the lees with 0 g/L dosage; disgorged February 2018. The Solessence Nature and Extra Brut are the same wine, but we prefer the Nature with its extra time on the lees and lower dosage.

JM Sélèque NV Soliste Extra Brut Premier Cru Pierry (\$100) 94 Light straw color with amber glints. Showing light autolytic notes accompanied by incisive aromas of toasty lees, honeysuckle and a hint of brambles. Bright and precise on the attack with nervy acidity. For being so dry, it has a surprisingly supple, creamy mid-palate with a touch of stone fruit. Finishes with a sense of hard packed earth. Overall, outstanding. 100% Meunier sourced from a single, horse-cultivated vineyard (Les Gouttes d'Or) planted with sélection massale in 1951, half vinified in concrete egg and half in barrel and aged on the lees in bottle for a minimum of 48 months; dosage 2 g/L; disgorged March 2017. This wine is the first disgorgement from the 2013 vintage, Jean-Marc began putting the vintage date on the label beginning with the second disgorgement, so consumers may find this wine labeled either NV or 2013 vintage.