

Champagne Pierre Moncuit, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger



In 1889 Pierre Moncuit and his wife, Odile Moncuit-Delos, established the house of Champagne Pierre Moncuit. Since 1977, Nicole Moncuit has managed the vineyards and made the wine, while her brother Yves has managed the sales. More recently, Nicole's daughter Valérie has been actively assisting in the cellar.

Mesnil lies smack in the middle of the Côte des Blancs and is its most celebrated village, in no small part because of the vintages of Salon Champagne and the single-vineyard Clos du Mesnil, owned, of course, by Krug. The wines of Mesnil are known above all for steely elegance and minerality, and those from *chez* Pierre Moncuit—which has some of the oldest vines along the entire Côte—superbly reflect these qualities.

The house farms 20 parcels totaling 37 acres in the grand cru-rated vineyards surrounding the village. These vineyards face east as they climb the Côte's chalk-infused flank. The majority of Moncuit's vines are 45-years or older, and two parcels, used in the best years for the vintage-dated Cuvée Nicole Moncuit, are just shy of their centennial birthday. In a region known for replanting vines before they reach their third decade to ensure vigorous production, these old vines represent a rare patrimony.

Another unusual bent in the Moncuit way of doing things is that no reserve wine is used in its production. All of its wines are made from a single year, regardless if they are labeled non-vintage or labeled with a vintage. The non-vintage wines spend a minimum of three years on their lees before disgorgement; the vintage wines spend between six and eight years on their lees. After disgorgement, the former age another three months before release while the latter spend another six months in the house's cellar before going to market.

In order to keep focus on purity and minerality, no wood is used during the *élevage*. Malolactic fermentation is the norm here. At bottling, the usual dosage runs toward 8 grams of sugar per liter, in contrast to the more standard 12 grams employed by the majority of the Côte's growers. Annual production averages 180,000 bottles, or 15,000 12-pack cases, and includes roughly 10,000 bottles of rosé Champagne. No business is conducted with *négociants* either to purchase or to sell juice.

The Wines

- *NV Blanc de Blancs "Hugues de Coulmet"*: The democrat from Sézanne, for this comes from 11.7 acres of Chardonnay growing in the commune of Sézanne to the south-southwest of Mesnil. Yearly production averages 50,000 bottles.
- *NV Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs "Pierre Moncuit-Delos"*: The aristocrat from Mesnil, for this is the primary wine produced at this estate's 37 acres of grand cru-rated home vineyards. If the democrat is round, soft, delicious, easy and fine, the aristocrat is lean, long, mineral, racy, and very fine. In a productive year, the production averages 50,000 bottles.
- *Vintage Grand Cru*: Made in the best years, this tends to be deeper, denser and more mineral than the non-vintage Mesnil wine and in need of more time. Production averages 50,000 to 60,000 bottles.
- *Vintage Grand Cru Cuvée Nicole Moncuit*: This comes from two adjacent parcels of 90+-year-old vines totaling 1.5 acres. Like the vintage, this wine is only made in the best years.