

# DOMAINE CARNEROS

ESTATE BRUT



## DOMAIN CARNEROS – THE STORY



- Domaine Carneros: Napa's Carneros district escaped damage to its winery, the vineyard manager confirmed, but a one-acre estate vineyard burned. The vineyard was in Sonoma, on the Stornetta Dairy property, which also burned down.
- Founded by the noble family behind Champagne Taittinger, Claude Taittinger's search for a worthy U.S. counterpart began in the late 1970s. In 1987 he selected a 138-acre parcel in the heart of Carneros, Napa Valley. Wisely selecting Eileen Crane to oversee the development of the winery and vineyards, the team created the quintessential California expression of the Taittinger style in Carneros.
- The heart of Domaine Carneros has always been sparkling wines, with distinctive styles ranging from the classic vintage-dated Brut cuvée to our luxury Le Rêve Blanc de Blancs. In 1992 we added rich, complex Pinot Noir to our portfolio and our passion for sparkling and still wines continues to grow. Learn about sparkling winemaking and Eileen Crane, Pinot Noir winemaking and TJ Evans, and our portfolio of wines.
- All of our wines proudly hail from the Carneros appellation, and 95% of our fruit comes from our estate vineyards. More on our vineyards.
- As anyone who has driven between Napa and Sonoma can tell you, the Domaine Carneros château is a stunning regional landmark. Join us for tableside service on the terrace or in the salon and savor the spirit of the Northern California wine country. Read more about the château or plan your visit.

## EILEEN CRANE – THE DOYENNE OF AMERICAN SPARKLING

- Eileen Crane is widely regarded as the doyenne of American sparkling wine – the most respected woman in her field, and is active in numerous wine organizations and local health non-profits.
- "Let me tell you the story of Domaine Carneros," says Eileen. "Founded by the Taittinger family of Reims, France, Domaine Carneros is first and foremost a sparkling wine house, and with a heritage as distinguished as that of Champagne Taittinger, it's no surprise all of our sparkling wines are produced using the exacting méthode traditionnelle. And like Taittinger, our cuvées focus on the elegant and long-lived Chardonnay."

"Those who know our sparkling wines speak of their balance, depth of flavor and wonderful finish; their great aroma, elegant style and little, tiny bubbles. Classic. Sophisticated. Timeless. Think Audrey Hepburn in a little black dress," she says.



We are a small grower-producer crafting our wines from grapes grown in our estate vineyards. This ensures full control and enhanced depth of flavor and balance from our healthy, estate-grown fruit. Our grapes are hand-harvested at night or early in the morning to minimize astringency and gently transported in shallow bins and loaded into a membrane press without crushing or de-stemming. We use only the first pressings.




*“Making great wine is a passion, which means never stinting on the details, never settling for second best. There is no formula. You have to be attuned to the rhythm of the grapes, the pulse of the wine.”*

## VINIFICATION

- "True to méthode traditionnelle, the second fermentation takes place in individual bottles where the naturally occurring bubbles are trapped for future enjoyment.
- The simplest method is the same as in soft drinks: inject the beverage with carbon dioxide. The second easiest option is the Charmat method, which puts the wine through a secondary fermentation in bulk tanks. But the most exacting technique, méthode traditionnelle, produces the finest sparkling wines - rich, complex wines with bubbles that provide a pleasant, tingly, creamy sensation. This is the only method used to produce Domaine Carneros sparkling wines.
- "Two stories underground, our cellar is a cool, dark environment perfect for the long aging needed for fine sparkling wine. Our Brut, Rosé, Ultra Brut and Blanc de Noir sparkling wines are aged three years in the bottle while the esteemed Le Rêve Blanc de Blancs is aged a full six years. Even three years is a rarity among sparkling wine houses, but the extra time on the lees (spent yeast cells) yields the rich complexity, seamless balance and delicious mouth-feel for which Domaine Carneros wines are known and loved," she says.
- In fermentation, yeast consumes the grape sugar in the juice and converts it to alcohol and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). With most wines, the CO<sub>2</sub> is allowed to blow off into the atmosphere.
- Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wines start off like most wines. In fact, our sparkling is made into still wine before becoming sparkling wine.
- Since oak barrels can impart astringency, these still wines are fermented in stainless steel tanks.
- The best known distinction in the traditionnelle technique is a second fermentation in individual bottles. This is where it gets really interesting...

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- Sugar and yeast are added to the wine and the bottles are sealed with crown caps (like beer bottles). Once again, yeast consumes the sugar and converts it to alcohol and CO<sub>2</sub>, but this time the CO<sub>2</sub> is trapped, producing those lovely little bubbles.
  - Wines produced using the méthode traditionnelle are typically aged in the bottle one to five years. (Vintage dated sparkling wines by tradition are usually aged in the bottle at least three years.)
  - The years on the lees or spent yeast cells yield a wonderful richness and complexity of flavors.
  - Since each bottle is its own fermenter, minor bottle variations can occur, creating one of the more interesting and enjoyable aspects of fine sparkling wine. Like other hand-crafted products, the individuality is part of the character and beauty.
  - Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wines undergo a fascinating process called riddling (or remuage). The bottles are slowly rotated and raised almost upside down to allow gravity and meticulous turning to gently coax the sediment into the neck of the bottle. (Like virtually all méthode traditionnelle wines throughout the world these days, our sparkling wines are riddled mechanically - our professional riddler oversees the process.)
  - Once the sediment has accumulated in the neck, a (literally!) very cool process called disgorging is employed to remove the sediment but not the CO<sub>2</sub>. In disgorging, the neck of the bottle is frozen, producing an icy plug of sediment about one inch deep.
  - When the bottle's crown cap is removed, the pressure in the bottle forces the frozen plug out, leaving clear sparkling wine behind.

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- Next comes the dosage. The dosage in our winery is a liqueur comprised of the same vintage of wine blended with pure cane sugar. A small dosage is added to each bottle to replace the volume lost during disgorging. (In general, champagne and sparkling wines have a final sugar level of 13 grams per liter or less, ours is usually about 9 grams.)
  - It takes just seconds to complete the disgorging and dosage fill. Then a cork is inserted and secured with a wire hood finished with exactly six half-turns. (The cork takes on the shape of a mushroom in about three months.) To "marry" the dosage with the wine, the bottle is gently tumbled and allowed to rest for several more months.
  - Finally, after a careful inspection to ensure there is no sediment, a foil capsule is placed on the neck and the three labels are applied. Then the wine rests for an additional three months before release.
  - If you've stayed with us through the *méthode traditionnelle* description, you can imagine how time- and labor-intensive the process is, and how many steps and equipment are unique to the method. In fact, you may be wondering: Why does Domaine Carneros go to all the trouble?
  - The answer is in the bottle!

## VINEYARD

- Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wines are crafted from cool climate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The climate is key: Carneros and Champagne, France are both considered "Region I," the coolest of the five designated regions.
- Grapes are harvested at night or early in the morning when their skins are tougher and less likely to be broken. The grapes are then placed in shallow one-third ton bins and gently transported to the winery.
- The grapes are pressed while still cool from the night, and this results in less phenolic extraction, minimal tannins and bitterness.
- Grapes are loaded into the press without crushing or de-stemming. This eliminates the damaging impact of a crusher/stemmer (aka "Grape Slayer") on grapes. Our presses use only low pressure and rotate very little, ensuring minimal bitterness.
- The juice is divided into cuvée, taille and hard press, with hard press being the most bitter of the three. As with all of the finest méthode traditionnelle wines, the hard press at our winery is discarded.

## ST SUPÉRY

- Michael Scholz, Vice President Winemaking and Vineyards
- Michael Scholz is St. Supéry Estate Vineyards & Winery's winemaker. Originally from Australia, Michael is from the 6th generation to grow up on his family's vineyard in the Barossa Valley. Michael comes to St. Supéry from Wattle Creek, a Sonoma property in Alexander Valley. Scholz is not a newcomer to the Napa Valley or St. Supéry. He previously served as the winemaker at St. Supéry from 1996 to 2001 before returning again in 2009. During his tenure, he created the distinctive style that has made St. Supéry the benchmark producer of Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc. The Cabernet Sauvignons Michael created for St. Supéry garner critical acclaim from top industry publications including Robert Parker's The Wine Advocate and Wine Spectator. Enologist and consultant, Michel Rolland says, "Michael Scholz is on my list of great winemakers from around the world."








- Biodiversity

- There is a vast array of wildlife at Dollarhide. Ducks, geese, egrets, cranes, owls, bees, jackrabbits, foxes and a bald eagle family can be found frequenting one of the seven lakes on the property, which teem with largemouth bass. Our rattlesnake population helps keep the burrowing pest population from munching on the vine roots and eroding hillsides with their tunnels. It is not uncommon to see mountain lion or bear prints after a rain, a warning to deer who love to eat grapes and tender young vines.
- We also install bluebird and owl boxes to encourage the habitation of bluebirds, which eat insects that are harmful to the grapevines, and owls, which eat gophers and other critters that can damage the vines.
- Returning Biomass to the Vineyard
- We create our own compost from a byproduct of the winemaking process. Pomace — seeds, skin and stems left over after crush — is trucked back to Dollarhide to be composted over the winter and eventually returned to the vineyard soil as a viable fertilizer and organic matter booster/soil builder. Having plenty of open space allows us to pursue a large composting program like this, a rarity in Napa Valley

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- To become Napa Green Winery certified, vintners must not only assess cellar operations and implement practices to conserve resources, but also create an action plan for continuous improvement. To actively reduce resource use, wineries participate in comprehensive water and energy use audits along with a waste diversion assessment. Finally, before a winery achieves certification, its operations are evaluated for environmental compliance with Napa County codes – providing peace of mind to vintners and the community.