

Cognoscenti

WINE

Champagne Tarlant Oeuilly, Champagne

At Oeuilly, on the outskirts of Epernay, lies the **Tarlant** champagne house. This family-owned and operated business produces about 100,000 bottles a year of champagne. Each varietal is pressed and vinified separately.



Four generations. From left to right: Georges Tarlant, Jean-Mary Tarlant, Georges Tarlant, Benoît Tarlant

At Tarlant, the goal “is to develop potential and complexity,” said Benoît Tarlant, who represents a new generation of the family. He showed us a range of distinctive, well-bred champagnes with good levels of acidity.

Their 13 hectares cover different soils—from chalk to sand to *sparnacien* (a blend of clay and chalk). The chalkier soils yield minerality and complexity in the wine, says Benoît Tarlant. Here they think at least as much in terms of a vineyard than in terms of a vintage—Benoît Tarlant compares himself to the Burgundians in this sense. He does not try to maintain a “consistent taste” from year to year; rather, he aims for “consistency of style and consistency of quality” in the experience.

The *Blanc de Blancs* was nicely rounded and showing lovely apple tones and a nice smoky finish. **Rating: 88** The unusual *Brut Zéro* was very fine; as the name promises, it has no dosage, allowing dry, earthy notes and fresh, clean, and round impressions to predominate. (It's not everybody's champagne, though; this is more a bottling for connoisseurs.) **Rating: 89** The *Rosé Prestige Millésime 1996* had a reticent nose, but was very fresh with good acidity. **Rating: 90**

Of special note is the family's flagship *Cuvée Louis Brut*, named in honor of ancestor Louis Tarlant. We tasted a Cuvée Louis, 50% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir containing wines from 1994 and 1995. In view of the maturity of the fruit, the dosage was kept to only 5.7. Benoît Tarlant calls this “terroir vineyard product.” It is fermented only in barrel. The nose is complex, with notes of baked bread, cooked apple, hazelnut and butter along with a beautiful bead and a lingering finish. Jean-Mary Tarlant insists that “a great wine requires grapes of great quality”; exceptional grape quality is surely evident in the Cuvée Louis. **Rating: 93**

This article was written by staff members of *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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