



Bérêche et Fils

Le Craon de Ludes
51500 Ludes

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WEBSITE >

STATUS:
NM

PRODUCER AREA:
9 hectares

PRODUCTION/YR:
85000

REGION:
Montagne de Reims

Overview

One of Champagne's most prominent rising stars, Raphaël Bérêche (pictured) has been working alongside his father Jean-Pierre at their nine-hectare estate of Bérêche et Fils since 2004, and today he is putting an increasingly personal stamp on this thoughtfully-run domaine.

The Bérêche estate owns vines in several different sectors of Champagne, with the three primary areas being the immediate vicinity around Ludes and Craon de Ludes, the gravelly terroir of Ormes in the Petite Montagne, and the area around Mareuil-le-Port, on the left bank of the Vallée de la Marne. A small parcel is also found in Trépail, in the eastern Montagne de Reims. Most recently, the estate has acquired its first grand cru vineyard in 2012, a tiny, 15-acre parcel in the village of Mailly.

The estate's vineyards are planted with roughly equal parts of the three varieties, and viticulture is decidedly natural, in the contemporary sense—Bérêche completely stopped using chemical herbicides in 2004 and has planted cover crops in all of the vineyards, and since 2007 a portion of the vineyard has been converted to biodynamics.

Sharp-eyed observers will note that beginning in 2013, Bérêche has changed its status from RM (*récoltant-manipulant*) to NM (*négociant-manipulant*). This was done for two reasons: the first is to augment the production of the Brut Réserve by about 15 to 20

percent, selecting grapes from three trusted growers in the villages of Ludes, Maily and Rilly-la-Montagne. These grapes will be used exclusively for the Brut Réserve, and the rest of Bérêche's wines remain entirely estate-grown. The second reason is the creation of a *négociant* range called Crus Sélectionnés, released under the label Raphaël et Vincent Bérêche. These are wines selected from various sources across the Champagne region, designed to illustrate and reflect their respective terroirs, with the first series of wines released in 2014.

At Bérêche, vinification tends towards the traditional: parcels are vinified separately, with natural yeasts used for smaller tanks and selected yeasts for larger ones. The family has slowly been increasing the percentage of oak used in the cellar, and today, about three-quarters of the production is vinified in barrel. The malolactic is systematically avoided, and the wines are bottled around May, without filtration and with a natural cold-settling, achieved by opening all of the cellar's windows and waiting for three days. Disgorging is still done entirely by hand, and unlike many growers who are embracing the idea of

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Tasting

Bérêche's wines are full in flavor and finely balanced, always showing a firmness of structure thanks to the avoidance of malolactic. With each successive year they seem to be acquiring more vinosity and complexity, which also allows them to find a balance at a lower dosage.

The range begins with the Brut Réserve, a non-vintage brut that usually contains about 25 percent chardonnay, 25 percent meunier and 20 percent pinot noir from the base vintage, along with 30 percent of reserve wines, also from the three varieties. In the past, Bérêche held back a portion of the Brut Réserve for an additional year of lees aging, releasing it as the Extra Brut Réserve with one to two grams per liter of dosage (the brut is typically about 7 or 8 g/l, depending on the base year). However, this has been discontinued as of the base-2009 release: "Sometimes the nose would get tired while the palate was still fresh," says Raphaël Bérêche. "I think this wine gets tired after a couple of years when it doesn't have enough dosage."

In 1902, Raphaël's great-grandfather planted some chardonnay vines in the Ludes vineyard of Les Beaux Regards, and today these are used to make the blanc de blancs cuvée of the same name. (These vines are also used as a *sélection massale* for replanting the rest of the domaine's chardonnay.) However, since the parcel is too small, Les Beaux Regards is no

single vintage, even though it's not stated on the front label, and while Bérêche used to release this exclusively as a non-dosé, it's now an extra brut.

As something of a counterpart to the Beaux Regards, the Vallée de la Marne Rive Gauche is a pure meunier from the vineyard of Les Misy in Port à Binson, near Mareuil-le-Port on the south bank of the Marne River. The meunier vines in this north-facing, chalky-clay parcel were planted in 1969, giving the resulting wine an uncommon depth and resonance of flavor. “Meunier is great for its fruit,” says Bérêche, “but it tends to be a little heavy. With these old vines, we get this concentration of fruit without overripeness, so it retains freshness as well.” This was first made in the 2007 harvest, vinified in barrel with indigenous yeasts and without malolactic, and as with most of Bérêche’s upper-tier wines today, its lees aging is carried out under cork rather than capsule.

The estate has traditionally made a classic vintage champagne from all three varieties, sourced from various terroirs. In the 2004 and 2005 vintages, this was repackaged as the Vieilles Vignes Sélectionnées, but following that, it was discontinued in favor of a new vintage cuvée, called Le Cran (although the first release, from 2004, was named L'Instant). The idea behind this is to focus more narrowly on a single terroir, using the vintage blend to showcase the best portions of Ludes. “We talk about premier cru and grand cru [in terms of quality],” says Bérêche, “but this demonstrates that there is much more minerality in the mid-slope of a premier cru terroir than at the base of the slope in a grand cru.” Le Cran typically comes from two vineyards of old vines, planted on the chalky mid-slope: about half of it is chardonnay from the west-facing vineyard of Les Hautes Plantes, planted in 1969, while the other half is pinot noir from the east-facing La Vigne St-Jean that was planted in 1973 (although in the inaugural vintage of 2004, there was also about five percent of meunier from the lower portion of this vineyard included in the blend). Like the Rive Gauche, this is vinified with indigenous yeasts in barrels of various sizes, and it's aged on cork. In 2004, Bérêche experimented with using 30 percent of new wood, and this clearly marked the wine: he has eliminated the new wood in subsequent vintages, and has opted to use largely 350- to 600-liter casks rather than barriques, to achieve a better balance. Bérêche’s intent is to produce this wine every year, regardless of vintage: “The idea is to make this a true picture of the terroir,” he says.

Perhaps the most unusual wine in the cellar is the Reflet d'Antan, composed of equal parts of all three varieties and made by a perpetual blending system. Started in 1985, this is stored in 600-liter *demi-muids*, with two-thirds of the wine removed each year and replaced with wine from the new harvest—in effect, a sort of “solera”, without criaderas. Historically, the Reflet d'Antan has shown a more ample, more richly burnished style than the other wines in the range, veering towards an oxidative character from its long aging in barrel. However, in recent years Bérêche has sought to bring more freshness and energy to this cuvée, slightly increasing the emphasis on the younger wine, and while it still retains its mature, compellingly anachronistic character, it now feels noticeably more lively and refined.

Bérêche used to make a classic, blended rosé in the past, composed of all three varieties and blended with a proportion of red wine from pinot noir and meunier, vinified in barrique.

This has been discontinued, in favor of a more premium, upper-tier approach. In 2006, Bérêche made a rosé version of Le Cran, entitled L'Instant Rosé No. 1, using Le Cran as a base and blending it with red wine from the Ludes vineyard of Le Champs des Dames. A mere 895 bottles were produced, aged on cork for its second fermentation, and the wine was released in 2009 as a brut nature. While this was a one-off release, it served as a sort of prototype for Bérêche's new rosé, called Campania Remensis: this comes entirely from the village of Ormes, blended from all three varieties and aged under cork.

In 2014, Bérêche has debuted a *négociant* series of wines called Crus Sélectionnés.

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Brut Réserve (base 2013)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2007)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2012)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2011)

☆☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2010)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2009)

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Brut Réserve (base 2008)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Réserve (base 2006)

★☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Extra Brut Réserve (base 2006)

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Extra Brut Réserve (base 2008)

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Extra Brut Réserve (base 2009)

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Extra Brut Réserve (base 2004)

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Extra Brut Réserve (base 2005)

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(2010) Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Extra Brut

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(2008) Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Brut Nature

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(2006) Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Brut Nature

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(2005) Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Brut Nature

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2012 Les Monts Fournois Brut

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

(2010) Vallée de la Marne Rive Gauche Extra Brut

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2007 Le Cran Extra Brut

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2006 Le Cran Extra Brut

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2005 Le Cran Extra Brut

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2004 Instant Extra Brut

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2005 Vieilles Vignes Sélectionnées Extra Brut

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2004 Vieilles Vignes Sélectionnées Extra Brut

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2002 Brut Premier Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2011)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2010)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2009)

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Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2008)

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Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2007)

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Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2006)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Reflet d'Antan Brut (tirage 2004)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

(2011) Campania Remensis Extra Brut Rosé

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

(2010) Campania Remensis Extra Brut Rosé

★★★  QUICKVIEW

(2009) Campania Remensis Extra Brut Rosé

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

(2006) Instant Rosé No. 1 Brut Nature

★★★  QUICKVIEW

Brut Rosé (base 2006)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Brut Rosé (base 2005)

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2014 Coteaux Champenois Blanc Les Monts
Fournois Ludes 1er Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2011 Coteaux Champenois Ormes Blanc Les
Montées

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2012 Coteaux Champenois Ludes Blanc Les
Vignes St-Jean 1er Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

2012 Coteaux Champenois Ormes Rouge Les
Montées

★★★  QUICKVIEW

2011 Coteaux Champenois Ormes Rouge Les
Montées

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Crus Sélectionnés 2002 Côte Blanc de Blancs
de Cramant Grand Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Crus Sélectionnés 1999 Côte Terroir du Mesnil Bl.
de Bl. Gr. Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW

Crus Sélectionnés Côte Blanc de Blancs Premier
Cru (base 2007)

☆☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Crus Sélectionnés 2002 Vallée Terroir d'Aÿ
Grand Cru

☆☆☆  QUICKVIEW

Crus Sélectionnés 2004 Montagne Bl. de Blancs
de Trépail 1er Cru

★★☆  QUICKVIEW



2013 Avizoise Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

📍 Agrapart & Fils

★★★

DOSAGE:

Extra-Brut

GRAPE VARIETY:

Chardonnay

WINE TYPE:

Blanc de Blancs

ORIGIN:

Single-vineyard

Champagne

REGION:

Côte des Blancs

Overview

This is grown in the Avize vineyards of Les Robarts and Les Gros Yeux, and it was vinified entirely in barrel and aged under cork for its second fermentation. It's unusually spicy and exotic, with notes of sandalwood and peppercorn under the ripe flavors of guava and stone fruits. The clay soils are evident here in the wine's body and richness, yet this is complemented by a refined texture and an elegant, nuanced complexity, with outstanding length on the finish. While it's still youthful and constricted in feel, it's a superb edition of this cuvée, and well worth putting down in the cellar. Last tasted: 4/19