

Champagne Lancelot Pienne Cramant

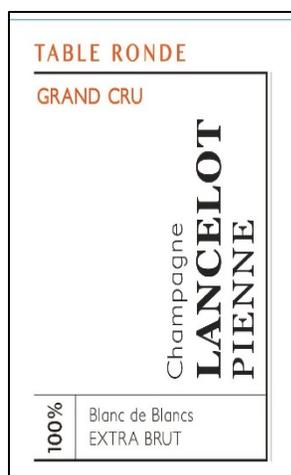


Gilles Lancelot produces lean, light, bright and crisp, spring-like Champagnes of remarkable purity and freshness. The style is perfectly dry, pure, very refined, straight and mineral. These are elegant, and rather lean and filigreed rather than big, mouth-filling Champagnes.

--Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate, October 2015

I had my second round of wines from Gilles Lancelot in Cramant this spring, with his Champagne Lancelot-Pienne bottlings showing beautifully and very much worthy of inclusion in any listing of great grower Champagne.

--John Gilman, View from the Cellar, April 2021



Gilles Lancelot is a member of *Les Artisans du Champagne*, one of the more elite of the bands of growers in Champagne. We met Gilles thanks to Jean-Marc Sélèque, a fellow member who invited us to the Artisan party in Reims during the April 2019 salons. This was at the swank Château les Crayères, and the greeting glass of Lancelot's *La Table Ronde* from magnum (2012 base) proved to be one of the most memorable wines of that week of intense tastings.

Gilles farms 22 acres of vines, more or less the same as his friend Jean-Marc over in Pierry. Gilles' base is in Cramant, and his 55 parcels are spread along the northern sector of the Côte des Blancs, dip into the Côteaux Sud d'Epernay, and reach into the Marne Valley. The breakdown is as follows:

- Côte des Blancs: 6 acres of Chardonnay in Cramant, Chouilly, Avize and Cuis.
- Côteaux Sud d'Epernay (in the villages of Monthelon and Mancy): 4.2 acres of Meunier; 4 acres of Chardonnay; and 1/2 acre of Pinot Noir.
- Montagne de Reims (village of Bisseuil): 1 acre of Chardonnay.
- Vallée de la Marne (village of Boursault): nearly a half-acre of Chardonnay; 4 acres of Meunier; and 2 acres of Pinot Noir.

The varietal breakdown is 60% Chardonnay, 30% Meunier, and 10% Pinot Noir. The oldest vines are 60 years old and the average is 40. As with everything, Gilles is careful with his labels, and each back label is concise with information specific to its cuvée. Annual production averages 70,000 bottles, or just south of 6,000 cases.

He comes from a long line of growers. His great-grandfather cultivated his own grapes in Cramant in the post Great War years while working as Mumm's vineyard manager, a connection that explains how Gilles was able to buy the old Mumm winery in Cramant early in this century. His grandfather began - domaine bottling his Champagne in the post WWII years. In 1967, his father married Brigitte Pienne from Chouilly and the two domaines merged. Gilles himself officially took the reins of Lancelot-Pienne in 2005 following his enology studies and after working at his father's side since 1995.

This lineage informs him. He has four children, and he takes great care to farm his vines sustainably, with careful monitoring of the parcels to determine disease threats and consequent treatments if required. Each of his many parcels offers something different, and each is farmed and trained in ways that best suit it and its grape variety. He's a keen blender and is careful to ferment only in steel or glass-lined concrete vats in order to have the clearest expression of the wine. He likes malolactic fermentations for the aromatic complexity this gives, and he leaves his wine in tank or vat over the winter, bottling in the spring or summer before ageing the wine *sur latte* (i.e., in bottles on their sides on thin wooden battens). Upon disgorging, he uses the minimum dosage to showcase the wine's origins. His reserve wines come from perpetual reserves that he began around the turn of this century. What he likes most in wine is detailed clarity and elegance.

<http://www.champagne-lancelot-pienne.fr/en>