



CHAMPAGNE PAUL LAUNOIS

BY LISA PERROTTI-BROWN MW

Finding an exceptional, hand-crafted Champagne from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger at an affordable price is like seeking the Blanc de Blancs Holy Grail. Paul Launois is a small, family-owned grower Champagne label that has recently broken free from its co-operative ties to produce an artistically crafted range of four wines that are well worth the quest.

THE BLANC DE BLANCS HOLY GRAIL

Julien Launois grew up next to Krug's famed Clos du Mesnil vineyard in the Grand Cru village of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, widely considered to be "the" commune for high-quality Chardonnay production and source of the greatest Blanc de Blancs Champagnes. Largely thanks to Clos du Mesnil, the grapes from this area have become highly sought-after. Le Mesnil-sur-Oger Blanc de Blancs Champagnes are increasingly challenging to buy, not to mention pricy. Finding an exceptional Champagne hand-crafted from vineyard land focused around Le Mesnil-sur-Oger at an affordable price is like seeking the Blanc de Blancs Holy Grail.

"We have 6.3 hectares (15.5 acres) in the Côte des Blancs, including 4 hectares (10 acres) in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger," said Julien. "My family has been growing grapes in this area since my great-grandfather. My grandfather was very involved in the co-op system, and my father helped to farm for other people. I learned how to disgorge and riddle when I was 12."

In 1972, the Launois family began selling a small amount of Champagne from their vineyards under their own name. At that time, they made the wine at the local co-operative, and their annual production was only 12,000 bottles. Their brand was called Champagne Jean-Pierre Launois.

When Julien turned 20, he left home for nine years, traveling the world and working on cruise ships. In 2009, he returned home.

"When I was 29, I came back and met my wife, Sarah," he said. "She is a graphic designer and artist. She wanted to study winemaking, but she was told at school that there were no women enologists. Now, she is our master blender, but I do the dosage."

With his mind set on joining the family business, Julien enrolled in winemaking school.

"I bought my grandfather's house," said Julien. "My father was going to buy the house next door to convert into our family's winemaking facility, but my neighbor doubled the price. So, we found another big facility, offered them half the price of my neighbor's house, and got it. This facility was so large and completely fitted that we didn't need to use the co-op anymore."

Julien's family left the co-op in 2015, bringing in their first crop that year for what would be their new grower Champagne label. This was also the year they stopped using herbicides in the vineyards. In 2021, the vineyards were certified organic.



WINERY INFORMATION

Region: France, Champagne, Côte des Blancs, Mesnil Sur Oger

Address: 3 ruelle de l'Arquebuse 51190 Le-Mesnil-sur-Oger

Open for Tastings: By Appointment Only

Major Grapes: Chardonnay

Vineyard Size: 15.5 acres

Own Winery: Yes

DTC Mailing List: No

Vineyard Sustainability: Certified Organic

Year Established: 2015

Owner: Julien and Sarah Launois

Winemaker: Julien and Sarah Launois

Website: <https://www.champagne-paul-launois.fr/>



Champagne Paul Launois currently has a range of four labels: Monochrome, Composition, Illustration, and Portrait. Every year, Sarah Launois creates a unique artistic design for each label. All the wines are 100% Chardonnay, each label expressing a different personality of the vineyards owned and farmed by the Launois family. Every new iteration of the multi-vintage Monochrome, Composition, and Illustration labels is numbered to distinguish the vintages and winemaking. The details of the winemaking are conveniently available on the back labels.

A man with a full grey beard and dark hair, wearing a green turtleneck sweater, stands in a room. He is positioned in front of a large window with a white frame, through which green foliage is visible. To his right, a white curtain is tied back. On a wooden table behind him, there is a red teapot, a small blue teapot, and a small blue cup. A framed picture of a cat is on the wall to the left. The room has a warm, orange-toned wall and a patterned curtain on the far right.

P CHAMPAGNE
PAUL LAUNOIS
composition #7

100% Chardonnay

63%
Verdange 2021

15%
Julin 2022

NON

MALO

22%
Vin de réserve

2 g/L
"Extra Brut" 12 °C

63%
Julin 2024

MAISON

75 cl
12,5% vol.

Vinificateurs :
Sarah et Julien Launois

Débuté par :
Son L'asocié Le Meur (1981)
Cordon du Lion
Les MCCORDON (1981, 1982)
Produit en France

scripte comme indiqué

QR code

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Reviewed with this article is the 2017 Single Barrel Grand Cru Le Mesnil Sur Oger #1702 Blanc de Blancs, which was made under Paul Lanois' "Single Barrel Champagne" program. This one was bought by the California-based broker Kimberly Jones and sold through her distribution network, Kimberly Jones Selections. Made from 100% Chardonnay, this single barrel of Champagne comes from Launois' Haut d'Aillerand plot in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. It was made without malolactic and aged 11 months in the "SB1702" barrel. It was then bottled in July 2018 with a dosage of 3 grams per liter. It was disgorged in November 2023. The result is simply spectacular and well worth the hunt.

I find that the Champagnes of Paul Launois fit into a style that is delicately perfumed, subtle, with restrained minerality, and characterized by a refreshing, chalk-driven finish, similar to the style of Salon or Dom Pérignon. If this is your style, you're going to love these wines!