

## CHAMPAGNE

## CÔTE DES BLANCS

DOYARD  
VERTUS

**OVERVIEW** | Sophisticated and elegantly harmonious, Doyard's wines number among the finest in the Côte des Blancs, demonstrating a remarkable personality and individuality. While they feel in keeping with the sensibilities of contemporary natural viticulture in their vitality and vinosity, there is nothing about them that is severe or aggressive—they do not lose sight of balance in their quest for expression. The long lees aging contributes to the sense of grace and refinement in these wines, as does the lower pressure, which also serves to emphasize the vinous character of the fruit.

**VINEYARD AREA:** 10 hectares

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 4200 cases

**SOIL TYPES:** chalk

**VARIETALS:** chardonnay, pinot noir

Yannick Doyard is an 11th-generation winegrower, with a family history of viticulture that dates back to 1677. The present estate in Vertus was established by Doyard's grandfather, Maurice Doyard, shortly after the First World War. Maurice Doyard began estate-bottling champagne in 1927, also serving as director of the Syndicat Général des Vignerons de la Champagne, and in 1941 he became a founding co-president of the CIVC (Comité Interprofessionel des Vins de Champagne), along with Robert-Jean de Vogüé of Moët & Chandon.

Yannick Doyard began making wine in 1979, taking over the family estate two years later at only age 20, when his father passed away. Today, Doyard's ten hectares of vines include holdings in Vertus, Oger, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Avize, Cramant and Ay. He has stopped using chemical fertilizers and pesticides since the early 1990s, and for the past two years he has been farming biodynamically, although he is "not dogmatic" about it. "There are some very good things about biodynamics," he says, "and some others that require consideration." Average vine age is a respectable 40 years, and unusually for the Côte des Blancs, all of the chardonnay is trained on the cordon du Royat, to keep yields lower.

Each of Doyard's wines is meticulously crafted, made exclusively from his top-quality grapes. While many growers make the same statement, Doyard proves his commitment to quality by selling off 50 percent of his harvest or more, keeping only those grapes that pass his rigorous standards of selection.

In the cellar, he scrupulously vinifies each of his parcels separately, and the winemaking follows the same natural sensibilities as the viticulture. "I want to intervene as little as possible," says Doyard. "You cannot improve upon what nature gives you." He has recently installed a Coquard PAI press, widely considered to be the finest press available, and only the cuvée, the first portion of the juice, is used, with the taille, or second portion, sold to the négoce. In fact, Doyard distinguishes each category even more narrowly: within the cuvée there are three serres, or individual pressings, and for his vintage wines, Doyard uses only the first two, believing that they are of significantly higher quality than the third. The wines are never acidified, and are chaptalized only in the most extreme cases, such as in 2001. About half of the wines are fermented and aged in barrel, left to rest on their fine lees without bâtonnage: "I don't want too much concentration," says Doyard. "I know it's fashionable, but sometimes too much is too much." Since 2007, he has stopped using cold-stabilization, preferring instead to simply leave the wines in the coldest portion of his cellar to allow them to precipitate naturally.

A hallmark of Doyard's wines is that they are bottled at a lower pressure than usual, at between four and a half to five atmospheres of pressure rather than six (or, in more technical terms, using 19 to 21 grams of sugar for the liqueur de tirage rather than the standard 24). "I don't want the bubbles to attack you on the palate," he says. "They should be harmonious and integrated [with the other components]." This is also a nod to tradition, as he says that in the past, when champagne was fermented under cork rather than crown-cap, the pressure was consistently lower than it is today, and he seeks to emulate that spirit.

- Peter Liem, ChampagneGuide.net, 2010



## trriage wines

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