

# PIERRE SPARR®

## OVERVIEW

### Introduction

The Alsace region of France is known throughout the world for its lovely, dry white wines. Vineyards were first planted in this narrow valley during the height of the Roman Empire. In the heart of Alsace's finest district, the Haut-Rhin, Maison Pierre Sparr Successeurs follows a tradition of winemaking that began during the reign of King Louis XIV. Since the winery's founding in 1680, the Sparr family has passed along its passion for Alsatian vineyards and winemaking from one generation to the next. Their drive for perfection can be seen in the family's devotion to the land, their attention to each vine-growing and winemaking detail, and their uncompromising quest for excellence in every bottle bearing the Sparr family crest.

### History of the Winery

Jean Sparr, who founded the Sparr winery in 1680, was born in the Alsace village of Sigolsheim. Over the next 300 years, nine successive generations of the Sparr family have worked the land, maintaining and expanding their estate. When Pierre Sparr took over the winery in the early 1900s at the age of 20, his innate business sense made him one of the pioneers in estate bottling in Alsace. His motto was "invest, progress and maintain" — a motto that continues to describe the domaine that is named in his honor, "Maison Pierre Sparr Successeurs."

Pierre Sparr lived through World War II in Alsace and witnessed the destruction of his village of Sigolsheim and its surrounding vineyards. With undaunted determination, he rebuilt the family's domaine, which had always been one of the region's most beautiful. His sons, René and

Charles, enlarged and replanted the estate's vineyards and expanded trade with European markets and abroad. Today Maison Pierre Sparr owns 15 hectares (37 acres) of vineyards in the heart of Alsace, at Sigolsheim; and it sources fruit from another 150 hectares (370 acres) of vineyards owned by growers who share their philosophy and with whom they have long-term contracts.

There are seven major grape varieties produced in Alsace: Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Muscat and Sylvaner. Maison Pierre Sparr has planted vineyards with each of the major varieties, plus Pinot Auxerrois, which is blended with Pinot Blanc in their Crémant d'Alsace Brut Réserve.

### Excellence without Compromise

For the Sparr winery, meticulous care of the vineyards is of paramount importance. Their philosophy is that "the quality of a fine wine already exists in the grape." In other words, the quality of a wine is determined in the vineyard — by viticulture and especially by the soil. For many years Maison Pierre Sparr has researched the different factors that contribute to the personality and originality of each parcel of its land. In 1996, a procedure was put in place that assures the precise choice of grapes to produce the finest cuvées. Further steps in the vineyards — avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides, limiting yields, harvesting by hand — give full expression to the individual terroir found in each of its wines. "Excellence without compromise" is the winery's motto, and the Sparr quest for excellence is never-ending.



# PIERRE SPARR®

## HISTORY OF MAISON PIERRE SPARR

### An Ancient and Highly Contested Region

Alsatian wine-growing dates back to the height of the Roman Empire. By 58 B.C. Romans had established vineyards in the region and built fortifications to protect their fields; these encampments became towns in the area. The Holy Roman Empire conquered the region in 870, and thus began Alsace's turbulent history as a fertile and highly contested territory. During the Middle Ages its wines were among the most famous and expensive in Europe. France gradually annexed the area during the seventeenth century, under Kings Louis XIII and XIV. The year 1789 brought the French Revolution, and with it the first division of Alsace into the départements of Haut- and Bas-Rhin. Germany, separated from Alsace only by the Rhine river, has claimed the region numerous times over the centuries, and German influences can be seen in the grape varieties and the tall wine bottles (flutes) that are required by law in Alsace. As is the case in Germany, the sugar content of the grapes is measured in degrees oechsle.

### Three-Hundred-Year History

In 1680, Jean Sparr founded the Sparr family winery in the Alsace village of Sigolsheim. Over the next three centuries, nine successive generations of the Sparr family have worked the land, maintaining and expanding their estate. In 1785, their vineyard holdings were greatly increased by François Pierre Sparr. Several generations later, Charles Sparr focused on increasing regional trade and improving the cellars for aging the wines. His son, Pierre Sparr, took over the winery in the early 1900s at the age of 20. Pierre's innate business sense made him one of the pioneers in estate bottling in Alsace. His motto was "invest, progress and maintain" — a motto that continues to describe the domaine that is named in his honor, "Maison Pierre Sparr Successeurs."

### Pierre Sparr Revives the Domaine

Pierre Sparr lived through World War II in Alsace, witnessing the destruction of his village of Sigolsheim and its surrounding vineyards. With undaunted determination, he rebuilt the family's domaine, which had always been one of the region's most beautiful. His sons, René and Charles, enlarged and replanted the estate's vineyards and expanded trade with European markets and abroad. Today Maison Pierre Sparr owns 15 hectares (37 acres) of vineyards in the Haut-Rhin, the finest viticultural region of Alsace; and it sources fruit from another 150 hectares (370 acres) of vineyards owned by growers who share their philosophy and with whom they have long-term contracts.

### Excellence without Compromise: Terroir Expression

For the Sparr winery, meticulous care of the vineyards is of paramount importance. Their philosophy is that "the quality of a fine wine already exists in the grape." In other words, the quality of a wine is determined in the vineyard — by viticultural practices, climatic conditions and especially by the soil's intrinsic composition and health. A mosaic of terroirs exists in Alsace, varying with the slope of the Vosges foothills and the alluvial soil of the valley. These varied terroirs explain the clear differences found in the wines, their individuality, subtle aromas and distinctive flavor profiles. For many years, the domaine has researched the different factors that contribute to the identity and personality of each parcel of its land. In 1996, a procedure was put into effect that assures the precise choice of grapes to produce the finest cuvées. Further steps in the vineyards — avoiding chemical fertilizers, limiting yields, harvesting by hand — give full expression to the authentic, individual terroir found in each wine. "Excellence without compromise" is Maison Sparr's motto, and the quest for excellence is never-ending.



# PIERRE SPARR®

## VINEYARDS AND VITICULTURE

### Two-Thousand Years of Viticulture

Alsatian viticulture dates back to the Roman Empire. By 58 B.C., Romans had established vineyards in the region. Alsace was part of the heartland of German medieval viticulture, as vineyards followed the spread of religious orders. France gradually annexed the area during the seventeenth century under King Louis XIII and King Louis XIV. The year 1789 brought the French Revolution and with it the first division of Alsace into the départements of Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin. Germany reclaimed the region in 1871, but it was returned to France after the First World War. Throughout history, Alsace has been prized for its vineyards and fine wines; its famous “route du vin,” or “wine route,” runs through the heart of its two départements — Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin — for 96 kilometers (60 miles) from Marlenheim to Thann, north to south.

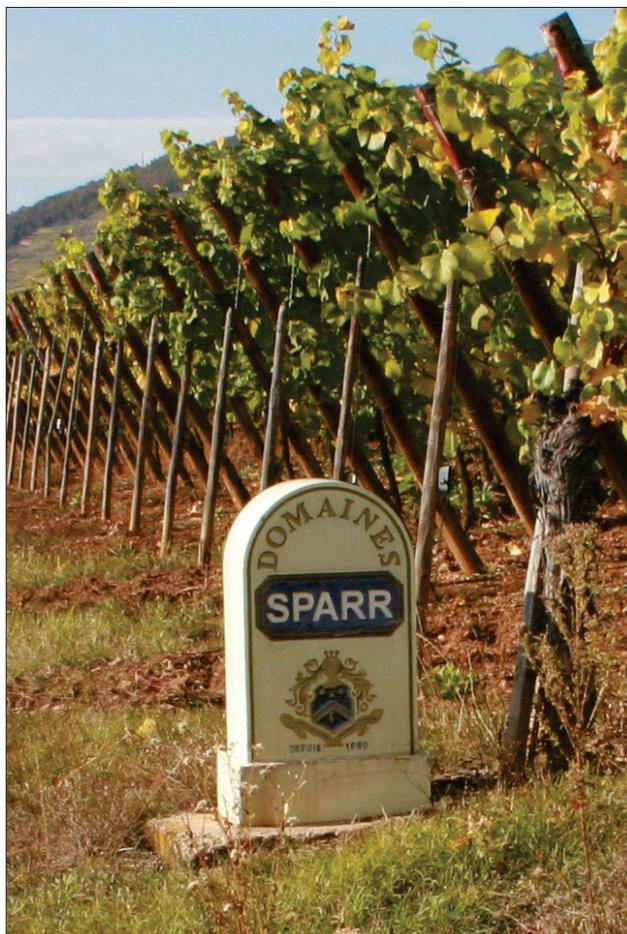
### Varied Terroir of Alsace

There are at least 13 major soil formations within Alsace, a mosaic of terroirs that vary depending on their location on the Vosges foothills or on the Rhine valley floor. The higher, steeper slopes of the Vosges have thin topsoil with a subsoil of granite gneiss, sandstone, schist and volcanic sediment. The lower slopes have a deeper topsoil due to erosion from the hills and alluvial sediment brought by the Rhine river, with a subsoil of clay, marl, limestone and sandstone. Drought can be a problem in this region of scant rainfall (Alsace is one of the driest regions in France), and vineyards planted on water-retentive clay soil have the advantage. Irrigation of these AOC vineyards is prohibited.

These varied terroirs explain the clear differences found in the wines: their individuality, subtle aromas and distinctive flavor profiles. Each vintage produced by Maison Pierre Sparr is a testament to the happy marriage between exceptional, well-tended soil and the generous climate of the Haut-Rhin in Alsace.

### Appellation Controlée

Alsace was awarded AOC status in 1962, with one appellation, Vin d’Alsace. Crémant d’Alsace was added in 1976, and Grand Cru in 1983. Yields are permitted to 80 hectoliters per hectare (5.9 tons per acre) in Alsace AOC, Grand Cru yield limits are 55 hectoliters per hectare (4.1 tons per acre). Alsace is the only AOC in France where the grape variety will appear as the wine name. Ninety percent of the wines are white varieties. Riesling is considered by growers to be the noblest variety and is fermented to dryness. Pinot Noir, which struggles in this northern climate, is the only red variety of Alsace.



# PIERRE SPARR®

## VINEYARDS AND VITICULTURE

### Seven Varietals; Five Grands Crus

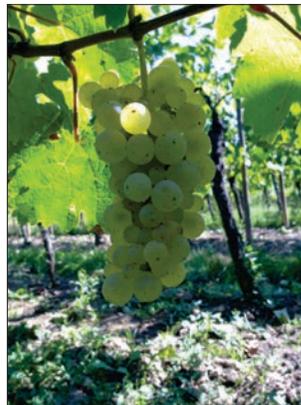
There are seven major varieties produced in Alsace: Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Muscat and Sylvaner. Maison Pierre Sparr has planted vineyards with each of these varietals, plus Pinot Auxerrois, which is blended with Pinot Blanc in their Crémant d'Alsace Brut Réserve. Growing on the foothills of the Vosges Mountains and on the Rhine river valley floor, the vineyards benefit from the dry climate and excellent sun exposure, which ensures the long, slow maturation of the grapes. A mosaic of terroirs exists, varying with the slope of the Vosges foothills and the alluvial soils of the valley. The vine density is 4,000 vines per hectare (1,620 vines per acre) in Pierre Sparr's AOC Alsace vineyards. The vines grow tall, with foliage that spreads wider than in any other region in France. A cover crop of grasses is grown in alternate rows in the Sparr family vineyards.

Among Pierre Sparr's — and the region's — finest vineyards are Grand Cru, near Turckheim in the Haut-Rhin; Schoenenbourg Grand Cru, north of Riquewihr, famous for its long-lived Riesling; the steeply sloping Schlossberg Grand Cru near Kaysersberg, producing fat, spicy Gewurztraminer; Mambourg Grand Cru, dominating the village of Sigolsheim, a vineyard celebrated since Roman times; and Sporen Grand Cru, near Riquewihr in the Haut-Rhin. The vine density is an average of 4,500 vines per hectare (1,820 vines per acre) for Pierre Sparr's AOC Alsace grand cru vineyard sources.

### Born in the Vineyard

Maison Pierre Sparr owns 15 hectares (37 acres) of vineyards in the heart of the Haut-Rhin and sources fruit from 150 hectares (370 acres) of vineyards owned by established growers who adhere to the Sparr winery's high standards of viticulture. Care of the vineyards is of paramount importance. Their philosophy is that "the quality of a fine wine already exists in the grape." In other words, the quality of a wine is determined by its vineyard origin.

For many years the Sparr family has researched the different factors that contribute to the identity and originality of each parcel of land. In 1996, a procedure was put in place that assures the precise choice of grapes to produce the finest cuvées that express their terroir origins. Meticulous care is taken in the vineyards — avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides, limiting yields, harvesting by hand — to enhance the distinctive aromatic and flavor profile found in each Sparr wine.



# PIERRE SPARR®

## WINEMAKING

### Harvest in Alsace

The beginning of harvest for each AOC is set by decree, generally 100 days after the median date of flowering, at the time when the grapes display the best sugar-to-acid ratio. Harvest at Pierre Sparr is done at optimum maturity for each variety, with each vineyard location carefully checked for ripeness. Yields are kept low to increase the concentration of the wines. Harvest is done primarily by hand in all their vineyards and exclusively by hand for the grand cru grapes and for those destined for Crémant. Grapes are transported to the winery in 120-kilogram bassines, or wide pans, and 100-kilogram bassines for Crémant.

### Vinification

Upon arrival at the winery, the fruit is cooled to 10° C (50°F) to provide immediate protection against oxidation. The whole-fruit clusters are pressed immediately. Fermentations proceed at a slow pace, generally taking approximately six weeks. The musts remain on the lees, without racking, under controlled low temperatures until the vintage attains the desired richness and texture. Maturation on the lees lasts for a minimum of seven months. Lees are often kept in fine suspension until April following harvest and are stirred once a week during this period, as increasingly heady aromas fill the winery. Racking is done by static draining of the must.

The élevage or maturation takes place according to the type and style of wine, in cement or stainless-steel tank, burgundy barrel or large oak barrel. No malolactic fermentation is allowed. The wines undergo microfiltration prior to bottling. Each cuvée is tasted prior to bottling by enologist Vincent Laillier (pictured above right) and his team to assure quality, harmony and homogeneity. All Pierre Sparr wines are now bottled with Stelvin closures, except for the sparkling wines, Crémant d'Alsace Brut and Marquis de Perlade.

### AOC Crémant

AOC Crémant d'Alsace is harvested each year beginning on the date fixed by the Alsace Committee of Regional Experts. Intended vineyards must be declared in advance, and each batch of grapes must attain a minimum degree of ripeness to qualify. The grapes are handpicked in bassines and put whole into the press. After secondary fermentation in bottle, they are bottle-aged on their lees for a minimum of 12 months. All wines destined for AOC Crémant d'Alsace are subject to analysis and tasting as required by law for this appellation. Marquis de Perlade (VMQ: Vin Mousseux de Qualité) is produced under similar specifications.



*Enologist Vincent Laillier produces the still and sparkling wines for Maison Pierre Sparr Successeurs in Sigolsheim.*

