

# Domaine Carneros Sparkling Wines for Thanksgiving



By Susan Lanier-Graham

**D**omaine Carneros, founded by Claude Taittinger and CEO/Winemaker Eileen Crane, is in Los Carneros AVA in California's Napa Valley.

While Domaine Carneros now offers a complex Pinot Noir wine, it is known for its sparkling wines made with certified organic, estate-grown Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

The marine air from nearby San Pablo Bay keeps the Los Carneros AVA cool—in fact, the coolest of all the Napa Valley AVAs. The low rainfall combined with clay soils, loam and shallow hillsides make it ideal for the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir fruits.

Domaine Carneros offers two sparkling wines that are ideal for your Thanksgiving table. Both

the Brut Rosé and the 2011 Brut Cuvée will pair beautifully with a roast turkey.

## **Brut Vintage Cuvée 2011**

The 2011 Brut Cuvée is the signature sparkling wine for Domaine Carneros. The 50% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir classic Brut Cuvée has a low sugar dosage of 0.95%, less than 15 grams of residual sugar per liter, 12.1% alcohol by volume (abv) and is aged three years in the bottle. The 2011 season was characterized by a cold late vintage, leading to low yields of very fine quality.

The aroma is filled with pear, apple and honeycomb. The flavors are intense and layered beautifully with pineapple and pear. I loved the tiny bubbles, characteristic of the true

Method Champenoise, which make this a lovely balanced sparkling wine. There is a smooth finish creating a creamy mouth feel.

The Brut Cuvée will pair nicely with oysters, goat cheese or even a filet, but should be ideal with that golden turkey for the Thanksgiving feast. The sparkling wine is widely available at \$33 per bottle.

Brut Rosé Cuvée de la Pompadour Domaine Carneros Brut Rosé is named for Madame de la Pompadour, the love of Louis XV who introduced sparkling wine to the court of Versailles. This might have a rosy hue, but it is a true brut with 1.1% sugar dosage. Domaine Carneros makes small quantities of this lovely rosé each year, a blend of 58% Pinot

Noir and 42% Chardonnay. As a lover of Pinot Noir, I prefer the Rosé over the signature Brut Cuvée.

To create this complex sparkling wine, the Pinot Noir is allowed several days' contact with the grape skins to enhance the flavor and color. The winemaker also adds a small amount of estate Pinot Noir wine to the winemaking process to enhance its complexity. The aroma on this one is filled with some of my favorite summer childhood food memories: wild strawberries, juicy peaches, apricots and honeysuckle. This is a dry, fruit-forward wine with spicy hints on your palate. While this one is perfect with your turkey—or the holiday duck—it will pair equally well with dessert or can be served as an aperitif. The Brut Rosé Cuvée de la



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Pompadour is available for \$37 per bottle.

**Visiting Domaine Carneros**

Domaine Carneros is situated about four miles from Napa and five miles from Sonoma. There are three 90-minute tours offered daily

featuring a behind-the-scenes look at the steps in creating sparkling wine in the méthode champenoise style along with a tasting of several wines. You can also arrange a private tasting at the chateau or a visit to the Sparkling Suite, which includes a tasting paired with caviar and

charcuterie, plus a bottle of your favorite wine to take home. Reservations are required for the bespoke experiences and can be made by visiting [www.domainecarneros.com/visit](http://www.domainecarneros.com/visit).

The chateau is a French-style

estate situated on a hilltop overlooking wine country. The grand staircase, formal gardens, massive terraces and breathtaking views are unforgettable—and a perfect setting for sampling these classic sparkling wines.