

Wine Spectator

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TASTING REPORTS

By Alison Napjus ■ From the Jun 30, 2021

Pop Stars

Chart-topping bubbly from across the globe add sparkle to any occasion

Spotlight On Zak Miller

Zak Miller is the new head honcho at California's Domaine Carneros—except he's been there for more than a decade. When founding winemaker Eileen Crane retired in 2020, Miller was tapped to oversee the estate's sparkling wines. "I worked alongside Eileen for 13 vintages, which prepared me very well to continue her legacy of elegant, Champagne-inspired sparkling wines," Miller says. He was presented with a unique set of challenges in 2020, but thanks to those 13 years of experience, he "felt fully prepared to make a seamless transition."

Having worked for many years in forestry science, Miller adds that "a younger me would laugh at the thought" of making bubbly at a major house in California. But his career path led him first to winemaking and then to Pinot Noir, starting out at Napa's Saintsbury Vineyards and continuing to estates in New Zealand and Chile. He returned to California in 2008 hoping to learn from T.J. Evans, Domaine Carneros' winemaker for still wines, but he was drawn to its sparkling production.



"It was upon landing at Domaine Carneros that I began to appreciate Chardonnay, under the tutelage of Eileen Crane," he explains. "Having my eyes opened to the possibility of Chardonnay and a new use of Pinot Noir—in sparkling wine—was mind-blowing." Miller emphasizes that it's a team effort at Domaine Carneros, including those who have been there even longer than he has. This dynamic helps to preserve the Domaine Carneros house style from year to year. "I think the 'draw' of sparkling wine is its versatility," Miller says. "I love that it can pair with any course, or it is perfectly fine on its own, before or after dinner. It is both serious and delicious, while also being celebratory and playful. "This juxtaposition is simply wonderful, and for this reason I'll always have a deep appreciation of sparkling wine."

DOMAINE CARNEROS

Carneros Blanc de Blancs Carneros Le Réve 2013

94 \$120

