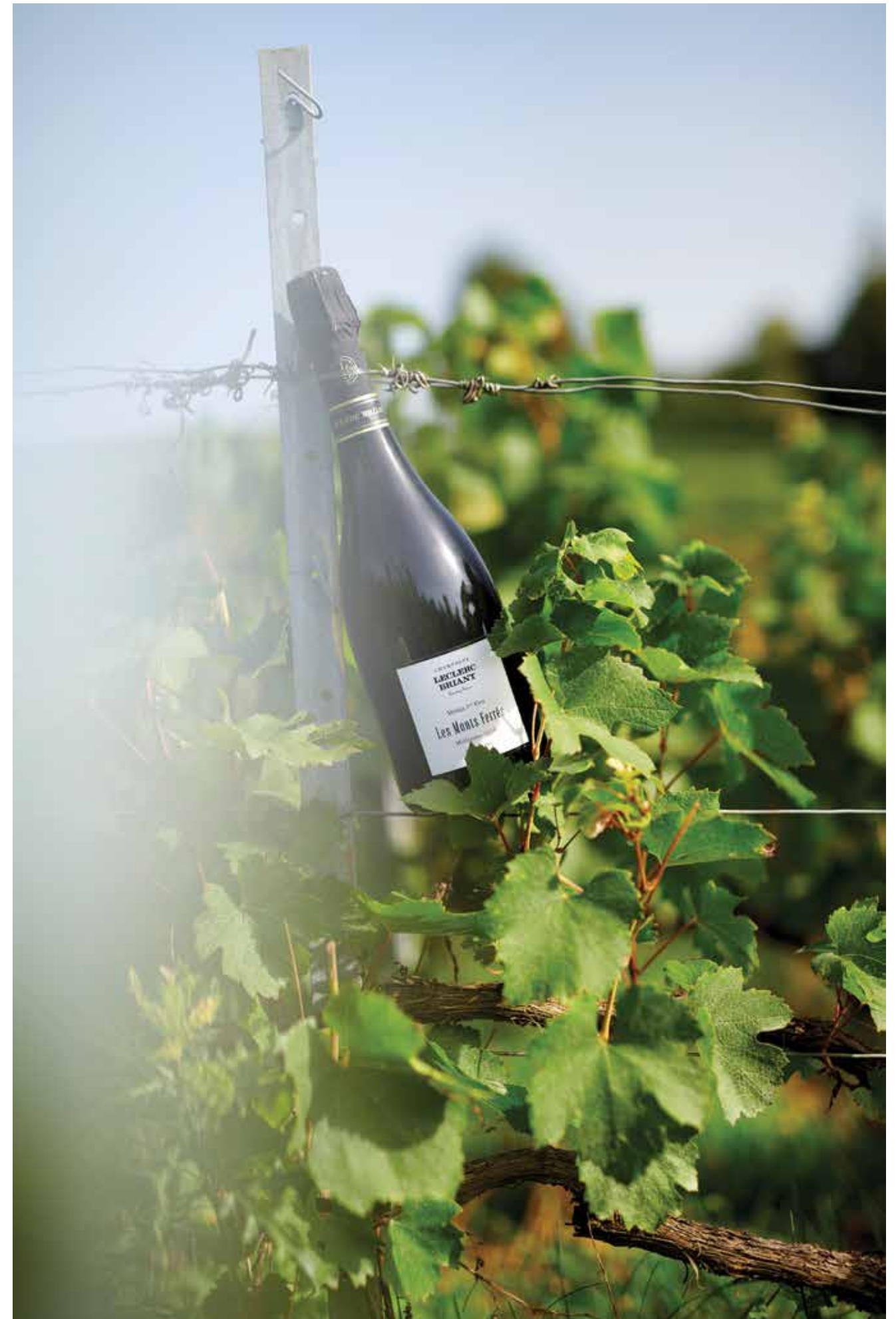


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Photos: Leclerc Briant

Alchemy in Épernay:

Inside the Living Cellars of Champagne Leclerc Briant

It's easy to be seduced by Champagne's surface pleasures — the sparkle in the glass, the hush of cellars, the tidy rows of vines that quilt the hills of Épernay. But once in a while, a visit cuts deeper. It goes beyond polished tasting rooms and gilded labels. It brings you into the heart of a philosophy — a quiet revolution disguised as refinement. That was my experience at Leclerc Briant.



The historic headquarters of Champagne Leclerc Briant in Épernay — a maison that blends quiet elegance with radical innovation. Behind this refined façade lies a deeply biodynamic spirit, where every decision, from vineyard to bottle, serves the land and its future.

Tucked into the storied Avenue de Champagne, the maison's headquarters feel both rooted and quietly radical. There is no flash here. Just the kind of calm assurance that comes with knowing exactly who you are — and where you're going.

From the moment I stepped into the main building, there was a sense of intentionality. Leclerc Briant doesn't just make champagne. They live it. The welcome was warm but unfussy, and there was no over-rehearsed script. Instead, it felt like being invited into someone's home — albeit one lined with bottles resting under a hushed, chalky ceiling. The cellar tour began in the expected way — through dim tunnels dug into the limestone, cool and constant in temperature. Bottles were stacked in the traditional pupitres, angled just so, waiting for their next movement. But then the tone shifted. We stopped before a series of clear glass barrels — beautiful, bulbous things, each holding an experimental vintage in progress. It was like peering into a laboratory built on intuition and trust rather than metrics.

"Glass allows complete neutrality," our guide explained, "It's not about adding anything — just preserving the purity of the fruit." There was something symbolic about it too: transparency in form, and in philosophy. Leclerc Briant is one of Champagne's pioneers in biodynamic viticulture — a discipline often misunderstood, occasionally mocked, and

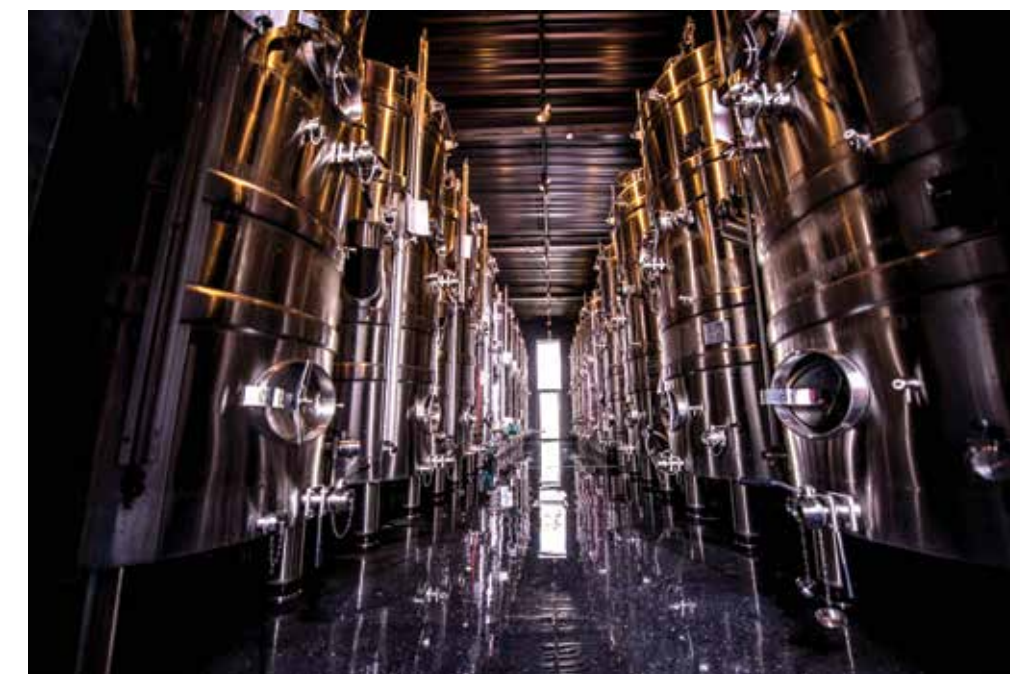


increasingly admired. Here, the vineyard is treated as a living system. No herbicides. No chemical fertilisers. Instead, cover crops are planted to protect and regenerate the soil. Lunar cycles dictate pruning and harvesting. Biodynamic composts are prepared with quartz, chamomile, and stinging nettle. It sounds esoteric — and in some ways, it is — but the results are very real. Vibrant, complex wines that seem to speak in a lower, deeper register.

The maison's current custodian, Frédéric Zeimett, has shepherded this vision since 2012, when the house was revived with the backing of American entrepreneurs Mark Nunnely and Denise Dupré. Together, they brought not just investment, but belief — in the land, in patience, in radical transparency. It's why you'll now find amphorae resting alongside oak barrels, why solar panels crown parts of the estate, and why their bottles are among the lightest in the region.



In these meticulously tended vineyards, biodynamics goes beyond technique — it becomes philosophy. Guided by lunar cycles and regenerative care, Leclerc Briant's vines express not just place, but purpose. The result is champagne with depth, clarity, and soul.



Led by Frédéric Zeimett and shaped by visionaries like Denise Dupré and Mark Nunnely, the Leclerc Briant team blends legacy with bold thinking. Their shared mission? To craft champagne that speaks not just of land, but of possibility.



Behind this refined façade lies a deeply biodynamic spirit, where every decision, from vineyard to bottle, serves the land and its future.



From traditional cuvées to ocean-aged Abyss, each Leclerc Briant bottle tells a story of experimentation, restraint, and respect. Light-weighted and consciously packaged, they represent not just great champagne — but a new standard for sustainable luxury.



AND THEN, OF COURSE, THERE IS THE SEA.

One of Leclerc Briant's most audacious projects involves aging their Abyss cuvée beneath the Atlantic. Bottles are submerged off the coast of Brittany, resting 60 metres deep in the Bay of Stiff. There, under immense pressure and total darkness, a quiet transformation takes place. The wine evolves differently — more slowly, more mysteriously. The result? A champagne of saline finesse and piercing freshness, as if kissed by the ocean itself.

Tasting it was one of the most memorable moments of the visit. It didn't feel like a stunt, or a gimmick. It felt like a natural extension of their philosophy: that the environment isn't something to be controlled, but collaborated with. The Abyss was layered with citrus, sea spray, and something faintly herbal — like thyme crushed between wet stones. You could almost taste the current.

The Leclerc Briant estate is more than a vineyard — it's a living ecosystem. Solar panels, green cover crops, and gentle stewardship of the soil reflect the maison's commitment to biodynamic practices and a harmonious balance between nature and winemaking.



We continued through a flight of their cuvées — the elegant Brut Réserve, full of orchard fruit and tension; the radiant Rosé de Saignée, bold and perfumed; the vintage Extra Brut, with its quiet authority and chalky grip. Each was distinctive, but carried a common thread — a clarity, a liveliness, an honesty.

What struck me most was not just the quality of the wines, but the coherence of the vision. Every decision — from the vineyard to the vessel — is filtered through the same lens: respect for nature, reverence for time, and a belief that less intervention can lead to more expression.

It's not always the easiest path. Biodynamic farming is labour-intensive. Yields are lower. Risk is higher. But Leclerc Briant isn't in the business of shortcuts. They're in the business of belief — in soil, in cycle, in sensation.

As I left the maison, the sky over Épernay had turned silver. A fine rain began to fall, softening the outlines of the vineyards. It felt fitting. Everything at Leclerc Briant — from their chalk cellars to their ocean-aged bottles — is a kind of quiet resistance to the fast and the loud. It reminds you that great champagne doesn't just sparkle. It speaks. If you're lucky enough to listen closely, it can even teach you something.

Beneath the streets of Épernay, Leclerc Briant's chalk cellars hold more than tradition — they're a laboratory of patience and purity. Among oak barrels and pupitres, experimental cuvées age in glass vessels, reflecting the house's fearless approach to terroir and time.