

**SPECIAL  
2014/2015**

# Vinum

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## **THE MYTH OF CHAMPAGNE**

The wine of poets  
and thinkers

## **HISTORY, STORIES**

How wine got  
its sparkle

## **THE CULT OF 69**

The world's greatest  
fizz put to the test

# CHAMPAGNE



EXTRA DRY  
CHAMPAGNE  
*Amour de Deutz*  
*Millesimé 2008*  
BRUT

L'ABUS D'ALCOOL EST DANGEREUX POUR LA SANTÉ. CONSOMMEZ AVEC MODÉRATION.



## Editorial

# Desert island drinks

In addition to the very few things I would take with me to a desert island – my cat, laptop and iPad, filled with 10,000 works of global literature and the 200 best comics, the complete discographies of Miles Davis and Frank Zappa, a solar-powered electric generator, a satellite dish for direct internet access, a twelve-piece set of baking trays and pans, a Bechstein grand piano, a Fender Stratocaster with amp, a Bose sound system, a Nikon D800 with lens case, a Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera, a GoPro, a water bed and a few other useful trinkets including a selection of Havana cigars from light to medium, one or two wheels of really good mature Emmental, a ton of flour, a barrel of olive oil from Bize and a couple of Jabugo hams... Among these very few items essential to my survival, I would naturally also include a selection of the greatest champagnes: Krug Grande Cuvée, Jacquesson Corne Bautray 2002, Bollinger R.D. 1998, Amour de Deutz 2000, Charles Heidsieck Blanc des Millénaire 1995, Dom Ruinart 1996 (the full list of my 69 ultimate champagne travelling companions begins on page 23). And since no ship would have enough cargo space to stow the rest of the world's most important luxuries, I will happily stay at home, chill a bottle, don my headphones, put on Duke Ellington's 'Money Jungle' and raise a glass to the growing number of champagne lovers to whom this special issue is dedicated.

Yours,  
Rolf Bichsel

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2014» on your tablet:  
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ISSUER  
Roland Köhler

**EDITOR / PUBLISHER**  
Intervinum AG, Thurgauerstrasse 66, CH-8050 Zurich  
Phone +41 (0)44 268 52 40, Fax +41 (0)44 268 52 65  
info@vinum.ch, www.vinum.ch  
Nicola Montemarano, Verlagsleitung  
Dana Schulte, Leitung Verlagsmarketing  
Stefania Tedesco, Assistance Eventmarketing  
Dominik Vombach, Onlinemarketing  
Maria Grazia Fiori, Sekretariat

**EDITORSHIP**  
VINUM-Redaktion, Postfach 5961, CH-8050 Zurich  
Phone +41 (0)44 268 52 60, Fax +41 (0)44 268 52 65  
redaktion@vinum.ch  
Rolf Bichsel, text and images  
Barbara Schroeder, text  
Rolf Frank, Ursula Geiger

**ADVERTISING**  
Switzerland:  
AVD Goldach AG, Sulzstrasse 10-12, 9403 Goldach  
Phone +41 (0)71 844 91 53, Fax. +41 (0)71 844 93 45  
leserservice@vinum.ch  
Germany:  
Güll GmbH, Heuriedweg 19a, 88131 Lindau  
Phone +49 (0)1805 01 25 63, Fax +49 (0)1805 01 25 64  
vinum@guell.de

**DESIGN AND PRODUCTION**  
Graphics and layout: Marco Bräm, Philippe Rérat  
Cover picture: StockFood / Cephas Picture Library  
Lektorat: Anne Fries, Das Lektorat., D-Düsseldorf  
Photographs: Rolf Bichsel  
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produktion@vinum.info

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# *The history of champagne*

*«What say you to a bottle of champagne?  
Frozen into a very vinous ice, which leaves  
few drops of that immortal rain, yet in the  
very centre, past all price, about a liquid  
glassful will remain; and this is stronger  
than the strongest grape could ever ex-  
press in its expanded shape: 'tis the whole  
spirit brought to a quintessence...»*

Lord Byron 1788 to 1824



Champagne is a drink like no other - not even a wine or sparkling wine like any other. And what about the German term «Schaumwein», literally «foam wine»? Sheer heresy, and should be relegated to history: beer foams, not champagne, which sparkles and bubbles in the glass. The equivalent French term Vin Mousseux is used from Dunkirk to Nice and back for the lowest category of bubbly only, whilst Champagne is instead a Vin Effervescent, wine in motion. In Germany the opposite applies: still wine is uncritically accepted, but the dictionary does not allow for the opposite possibility of a «moving wine».

Perhaps that is why so many Germans made the journey to the Champagne region - because of a failure of semantics at home. Did Krug dream of Reims? Was Leipzig too heated for Heidsieck? Were things too dumb in the homeland of Mumm? Did Bollinger have no interest in Trollinger? However, it was not these valiant emigrants who invented champagne: that honour falls to the British, who knocked the wind out of the frog-eaters' sails and dived straight into the new wine.


Champagne is an hourglass standing on its head. Sand trickles in the eternal shackles of gravity from top to bottom, from heaven to hell, from now to then, from good to evil, from young to old. Sand resignedly slides away. Champagne sparkles from bottom to top. Champagne measures time won; hourglasses measure time gone. The moment they escape from their wet cocoon, champagne bubbles reach unswervingly for the stars, aspiring to the heavens in precise, harmonious parables. Sand does not do this - and neither does beer foam. Beer foam flares up defiantly and, adrift, collapses in on itself, implodes without rhythm, order or beat.

Champagne is the drink of poets and thinkers. Amado, Anouilh, Apollinaire, Aragon, de Beauvoir, Bernhard, Blixen, Böll, Borges, Boyd, Byron, Capote, Christie, Conrad, Dürrenmatt, Fitzgerald, Follett, Gary, Green, Hamsun, Hemingway, Hofmannsthal, Huxley, Jünger, Kafka, Lawrence, H. & T. Mann, Mauriac, Meyrink, Miller, Modiano, Moravia, Nabokov, Pagnol, Pinter, Pirandello, Proust, Remarque, Roth, Schnitzler, Semprún, Simenon, Simmel, Steinbeck, Wells, Yourcenar, Zweig: almost every author of repute from A to Z has dedicated a few lines to champagne. Hugo alone loudly cursed it and only Hesse did not like it, preferring still wine from Alsace.

Champagne is the wine of storytelling. Champagne has made wine history with its tales because of its light and lascivious nature that allows thought to flow, because it balances the visible with the invisible, matter with mind. Champagne is a sublimation of the grape, a child of the vine, rooted deep in matter. Champagne is concrete, real, drinkable, and can be smelt, tasted, enjoyed. However, this does not mean that it has lost its soul, which remains intangible, liberated from the glass, coquettish, merry, light, and blends and nests itself in a haze of vague dreams.

Champagne is a wine without borders, the wine of freedom, light, knowledge and emancipation. It combines long-established craftsmanship and technical precision with transcendence, frivolity and poetry. It was personally invented by God himself, cultivated by pious Frenchmen, given sparkle by breezy Englishmen, perfected in form by precise Germans, marketed by shrewd Dutchmen, and is enjoyed by Russians, Canadians and Americans. Champagne is a cultural asset of humankind.





*«However, ten centuries later the monk Dom Pérignon invented champagne and lent it his name. Hautvillers abbey where Dom Pérignon spent his youth made its fortune from this wine. See how he thoughtfully bends over a barrel, struggling for breath and showing a haggard expression, and tenderly caresses it with his eyes, studies the rules and whims of wine, the source of so much good and evil; and proclaims as Archimedes once joyfully did, Eureka.»*

**J. L. Gonzalle** «Der Champagner», Reims 1860

# *The invention of champagne*

**C**hampagne was invented by Dom Pérignon. Born in 1638, in 1665 he entered Hautvillers Abbey near Épernay as a novice, where he held the responsible position of cellar master until his death in 1715. According to sources of varying reliability, he was blind and yet would caress the barrel «with a tender expression», something which I am not the only one to find a riddle. More about his secret can be found in a small, useful volume by another man of God, Jean Godinot, published in its second edition in 1722 and containing in addition to revelations about Dom P a wealth of information about cellar techniques and viticulture which remains relevant today: «to a bottle of wine, add a pound of rock sugar, five or six pitted peaches, four pinches of cinnamon and powdered nutmeg». This mixture was added to some brandy, stirred thoroughly, sieved and placed in a barrel once the must had finished its fermentation, «which makes the wine fine and delicious». So not even the slightest reference to the second bottle fermentation needed to make true champagne.

There is more to be learned from Godinot's text: «the world», he writes, «has been wild about sparkling wine for around twenty years». Crucially, the world here is limited to the two cities to which post was dispatched, namely Paris and London. In London in 1662, physicist Christopher Merret filed a patent for a method to produce sparkling (champagne) wine. This method used a thick bottle able to stand up to pressure and which could be mass produced, together with a high-quality cork - both achievements which became global phenomena. The thick bottle with a long neck was patented in the same year and cork was widely used from 1690. Twenty years after «sparkle» was invented, high society in Paris was still enjoying itself with champagne that poured still and unspoil from the bottle.

The first sparkling champagnes which passed over the counters of Parisian inns reached the French capital via London. However, still champagnes - grown on sites in the Épernay and Reims regions which still make headlines today (Aÿ, Dizzy, Ambonnay, Mailly, Verzenay) - had long been in circulation there. Drinking culture lauded those who did away with rich Spanish wine in favour of elegant, crystal clear varieties pressed from grapes ripened on the limestone slopes of Montagne de Reims and harvested by winegrowers who combined humble diligence with centuries of experience. High society followed the new fashion - a perfect fit for the spirit of the age - all too readily. Indeed, did the European cultural scene not turn its back on the melancholic late Baroque and dive headfirst into the adventure of Rococo?

Harvests were vinified, developed and sold in the cellars of local monasteries, thus securing several centuries of wealth and prestige. Those not wishing to be left behind in the battle for sparkle had to adapt and wipe any reservations away from beneath the barrels. This meant that bottles here were soon also sparkling over, thanks not to the clairvoyant Dom but instead to a patent from an ingenious London researcher.

Why of all things did this wine from a corner of France succeed in achieving status and prestige, this area walking the tightrope along the edge of the region climatically suited to winegrowing? Once again we turn to the dubious terroir, officially referenced by all but which secretly no-one is quite so ready to believe. The slopes around Reims and Épernay with their gradients and limestone-heavy soils are genuine winegrowing habitats. However, this is not for wine with high alcohol content and thus a full-bodied style which court the affections of drinkers, but wine which proves transparent, airy and light. However, it was precisely this that those who



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alled themselves connoisseurs expected of a fine wine: wine was a healthy refreshing drink and men (and women) wanted to be able to enjoy it in quantity without sliding under the table.

The fact that monasteries in Champagne (as in Burgundy) which hoarded winemaking and cellaring knowledge that would meet today's technical requirements significantly contributed to the success of champagne. Thanks to experts such as Dom Pérignon or Godinot, this knowledge saw the practical use of theories which would still send devotees of natural cultivation into a frenzy today.

However, the competition was not asleep. The south (Portugal, Spain, Bordeaux) was also courting the attentions of Brits, Germans, Belgians, Scandinavians and the Dutch with its sun-soaked juices. This forced the far north to come up with something different. Although sparkle in wine - initially mocked and derided, then feared, ultimately practiced - was long considered a betrayal of a good cause in this region, an interference in the natural order of things, it quickly also became a guarantee of economic survival. The sparkling, bubbly, effervescent wines from Champagne became the latest foaming fashion, not because the producers wanted it but because consumers were thirsting for it. Even after the boom it remained limited to a small area and difficult to produce, still a niche product not able to be multiplied at will, something expensive and sought-after. This is still the case today.

In 1729, a young Reims cloth merchant named Nicolas Ruinart founded his own office. Little by little he made the transition to the wine trade as it offered a way of increasing his returns: fabrics offered a margin of around

20 percent whilst wine could rake in double that. Ruinart became the world's first champagne house, and the man after whom it was named became the founder of the first global luxury brand.

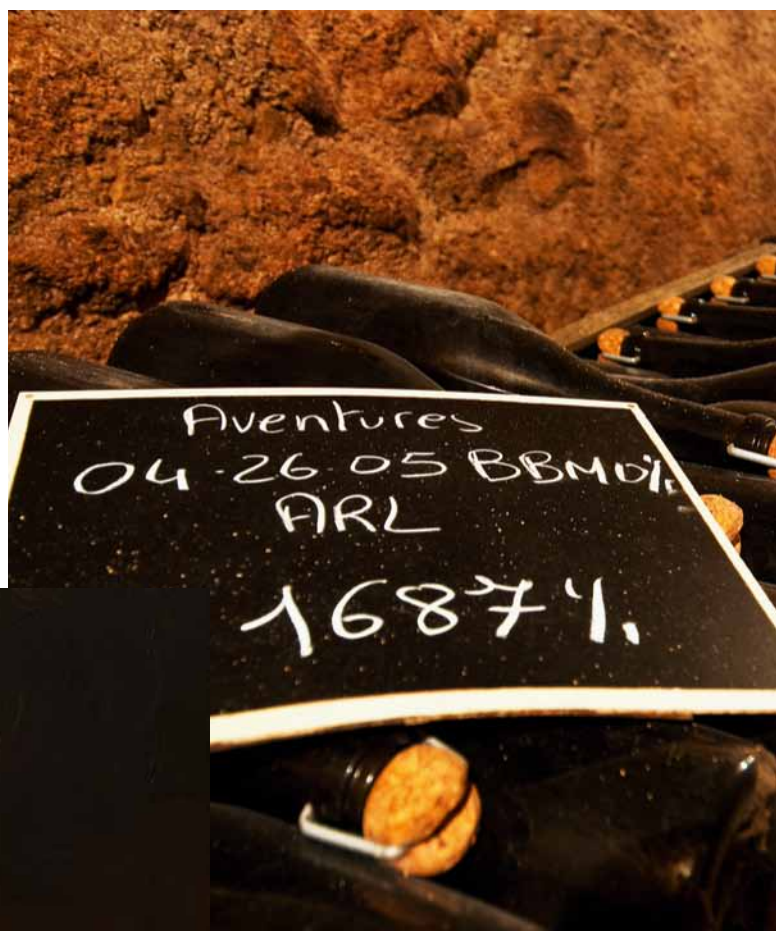
The Ruinarts initially sold their wines in the close vicinity and further surrounding area, later conquering Germany, Belgium, Austria, Denmark and Sweden in the second half of the 18th century. Three quarters of Ruinart champagnes were soon leaving their native land. Ruinart grew and prospered - and soon garnered competition. This was initially from within its own ranks in the form of Claude Moët (from 1743) and Philippe Clicquot (from 1772), also the offspring of old cloth merchant dynasties, but soon also from companies founded by (German) immigrants: Florenz Ludwig Heidsieck (who was of course not really from Leipzig as joked above, but Westphalia) founded his house in 1785, with the Mumm brothers (1827), Bollinger (1829), Deutz (1838) and Krug (1843) following in his footsteps a few decades later.

Dom Pérignon's fairy tale survives. It originates from the height of the wine trade in the 1860s. Although the Dom really did live and work, his tonsure concealed no thoughts of sparkling wine or the eponymous cuvée which first saw the flickering light of the cellar in the 1920s. It was produced by Moët & Chandon as a one-off wine to celebrate the anniversary of many years of successful collaboration with their English sales partner and was a special (and especially wonderful tasting) blend originally bottled exclusively for members of the (overflowing) owner family, as a form of liquid share certificate. Only an English wine journalist groaning that such a gem could not be kept under lock and key prompted the heads of Moët to reluctantly release the glorious liquid under the name Dom Pérignon. This dubious brand had been registered by Mercier a few



decades earlier but never actually used, and marriage brought it under the ownership of Moët & Chandon in the early 20th century. Something planned to be a special one-off wine was such a success that the Dom went into production whether they liked it or not.

A curmudgeonly British marine officer and journalist making a reasonably successful attempt to write third-rate spy novels outed himself as an unconditional fan of this fine cuvée. In the brilliant lady-killer and secret agent James Bond, he had created an alter ego with a preference for ordering Dom Pérignon when enticing almond-eyed beauties beneath his sheets - a wine which Ian Fleming (the haggard hack who would die of excess tobacco and alcohol consumption, although certainly not champagne but cheap scotch) could definitely only afford once Bond's royalties began to pour in. In the late 1950s canny film producer and former circus director Harry Saltzman secured the rights to the novels, and together with another Fleming-loving filmmaker named Albert «Cubby» Broccoli he brought Bond to the big screen with Sean Connery in the role of the secret agent. The first films - «Dr. No» (1962), «From Russia With Love» (1963) and «Goldfinger» (1964) - exploded like a bomb and played their part in the cult surrounding Dom Pérignon (and the global renaissance of champagne after many years of crisis).



The heads of DP (Dom Pérignon for the uninitiated) have many reasons to smile: not least thanks to Ian Fleming's fictional hero James Bond, not afraid to display a knowledge of vintages, this charismatic top cuvée from the cellars of Moët & Chandon in Épernay is THE champagne of the rich and beautiful. And it still tastes magnificent!

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# *Why champagne wins every battle*

*«The congress did not march, it danced (...) in the effervescent atmosphere of conviviality and champagne wines. At the table next to us were the Prince Koslowski, Alfred and Stanislas Potocki, some Russians from Emperor Alexander's suite, and a little further on, Nostiltz, Borel, Palfi, and the Prince Esterhazy. There were many toasts and many clever sallies, wit sparkled on the lips as champagne sparkled in the glasses.»*

**Auguste Louis Charles** Comte de la Garde-Chambonas (1783 bis 1853),  
«Anecdotal Recollections of the Congress of Vienna», Paris 1843

Strictly speaking, what gave wine its sparkle was nothing other than (sparkling) wine itself. Sparkle is the result of every fermentation, and it is much more difficult to remove sparkle (carbon dioxide) from wine than it is to add it. For centuries, the pressure in badly maintained barrels resulted in bangs and damage, risking winemakers' life and limb. Carbon dioxide was the devil. And suddenly it was a desirable element in wine?

Cosmopolitan women knew what to do, and packed a whisk in their pretty manicure cases which they would use to drive the bubbles back out of the wine. Sparkles were in but burping at the table was still far from acceptable. Champagne seemed to be more a fashionable matter of taste than a drink willingly chosen. Uncorking a bottle proved to be a pain: people would even use their swords as opening aids, or would leave the bottle unopened by the fireplace where the heat would make it burst of its own accord. Once it was finally open, the champagne (which did as it pleased) had to be suitably transferred to glasses without half of it ending up on the floor. If you indulged in a long gulp rather than carefully sipping at the chalice and tipping the remainder into specially provided bowls, you would have yeast crunching in your teeth like sand in lettuce. Even if you managed to avoid all the pitfalls, the wine was pleasantly sparkling in the mouth but so citrus-sharp that it would be sweetened until the spoon stuck (no, really). Although champagne was nice to look at, it was rarely a good wine for the table.

But where there is variety there is always a way. Champagne was a stroke of genius with teething problems and simply needed something to combat its child-

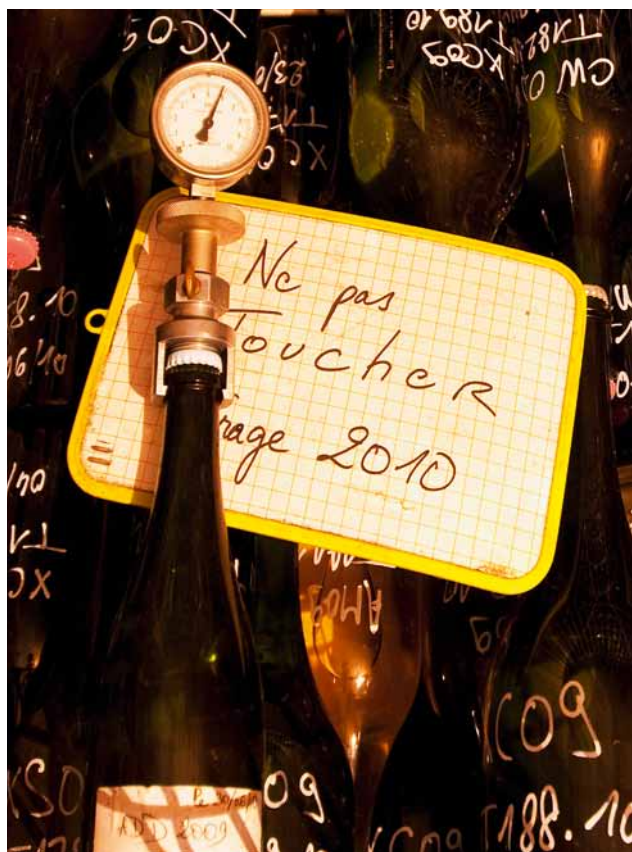


hood ailments, which is exactly what the enterprising merchants of Reims and Épernay provided.

Champagnes became markedly better, milder and more rounded when allowed enough time to mature. Instead of erecting expensive warehouses where the bottles (in the absence of temperature control before the invention of energy-guzzling cooling units) would shatter in turn, shortly before the French Revolution Claude Ruinart - the son of the company founder - annexed some of the decommissioned mines running for hundreds of kilometres which were carved into the limestone ground of Reims (and Épernay) by the ancient Romans followed by generations of stonemasons, tunnels which nobody else wanted. Within these he stored thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands bottles of very young champagne, where they could grapple with their animated existence in peace and unwavering, immovable coolness.

If the corks which gradually replaced wood plugs wrapped in oil-impregnated hemp from the early 18th century inwards were driven entirely into the bottle neck (as was usually the case), opening a bottle of champagne more than ever became a real act of bravery. It was much easier if the cork protruded slightly from the neck, as this enabled it to be pulled out of the bottle with a press of the finger or special tongs.

And what if the cork was reluctant to stay in the neck of the bottle? It was held in place with a «muselet», first made of hemp twine and then a metal clamp ultimately made of thin wire as it is today, an invention also mischievously and erroneously ascribed to Dom Pérignon. To prevent the twine or clamp from exerting too much pressure on the cork and affecting it, in 1844 a Châlonsen-Champagne wine merchant named Adolphe





Jacquesson came up with the (this time historically verified) invention of the tin plate cap, giving collectors the world over the puzzle of what to do with it.

The unpopular sediment of the second bottle fermentation was conjured out of the bottle from 1818 using a complex device called a remuage rack, invented by a Veuve Clicquot employee named Antoine de Muller. This rack held the bottles away from their horizontal storage position, sat at an incline for an extended period of time, allowing the sediment to settle on the bottom of the temporary bottle closure where it was easier to remove.

From 1884 onwards, this removal was performed by placing the top of the bottle in a cooling liquid, letting the closure and all of the sediment (now frozen solid) break out of the bottle, replacing the missing wine with fresh liquid, and on occasion «dosing» the bottle with (sometimes quite large amounts of) liqueur consisting of raw sugar dissolved in the wine, designed to moderate the flavour. As we can see, champagne producers preferred to work in a solution-oriented way.

Champagne has also won some entirely different battles. In the late 18th century around 20,000 hectares of Champagne were planted with vineyards, but only a few hundred thousand bottles of sparkling champagne were produced. A hundred years later a comparable vineyard acreage produced 30 million, and today this number is more than 300 million. This allows us to conclude that although only part of the harvest was initially made into champagne, the Champagne region represented a limited but temporarily rather underused reservoir of base wines. As production increased, demand had to be boosted. There was particular market potential beyond the borders of France, but this was things were not

looking good in this area: the Napoleonic Wars raised the whole of Europe against France, which eventually succumbed and had to fight for its borders at the Congress of Vienna intended to redesign Europe.

What began as a defeat with catastrophic consequences ended with the total definitive victory of champagne. They may have been outnumbered on the battlefield, but in the field of sparkling wine none could rival the French and their immigrants. The aim of the Congress of Vienna (23 September 1814 to 8 June 1815) was to re-shuffle and re-allocate the map of Europe, but it also became a unique and joyous celebration. During the day delegates, sovereigns, princes, emperors and tsars argued over the sovereignty of regions whilst the night hours saw dancing, feasting and amusement. The French delegation, led by Talleyrand, contained a top chef (the legendary Carême), a painter, a pianist and a PR woman in the form of Talleyrand's charming niece Dorothee. With his own particular skill, the great strategist and diplomat transformed the French defeat into an absolute victory for the French way of life, including champagne which flowed freely at the congress, supplied by Talleyrand's friend Jean-Remy Moët who the prince is said to have told: «thanks to this glass and its contents, your name will sparkle longer than ours». Moët also sponsored the victory celebrations organised by Tsar Alexander I and held in Vertus (Côte des Blancs). Russia became one of the most important export countries for sparkling gold from Reims and Épernay. As the Russian soldiers plundered her cellars, Veuve Clicquot herself commented: «let them do it. They will come back - and pay.»

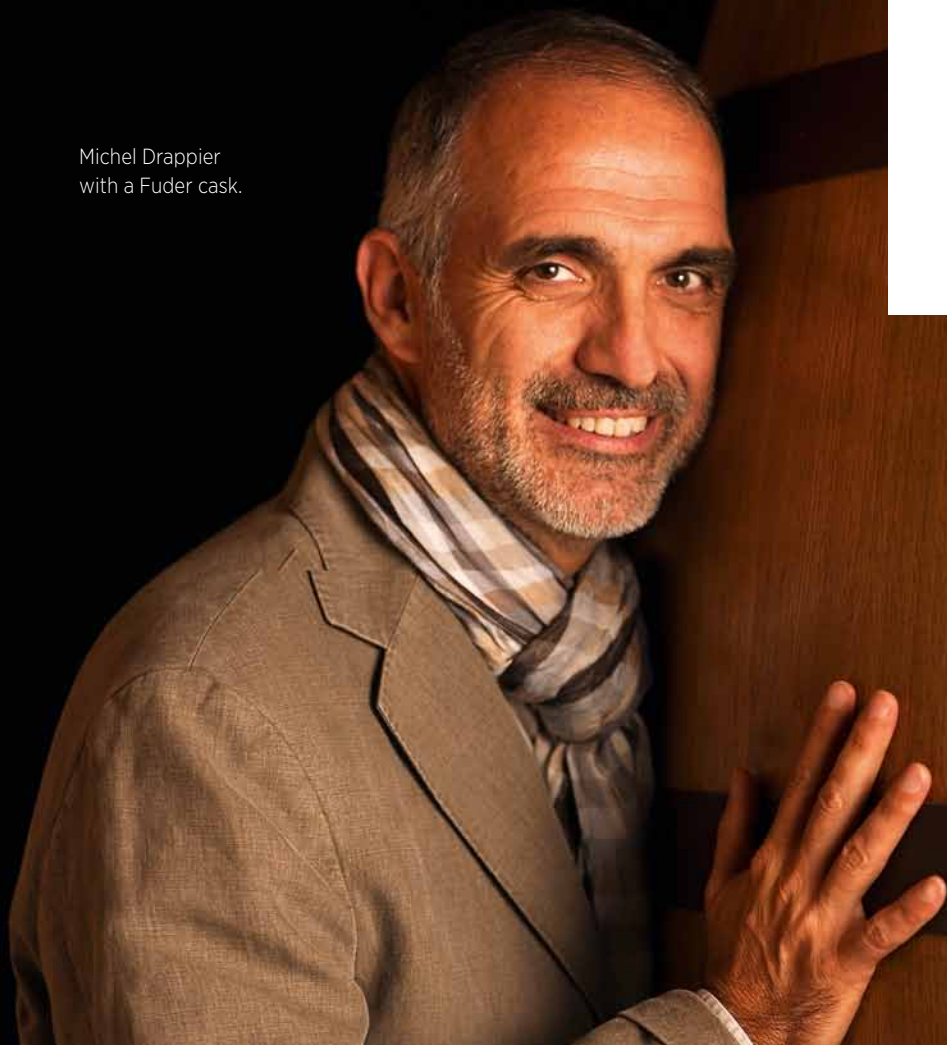


Michel Drappier  
with a Fuder cask.



CHAMPAGNE  
**DRAPPIER**

DOMAINE À URVILLE DEPUIS 1808  
CAVES À REIMS - FRANCE



## Champagne Drappier

# From Saint-Bernard to Saint-Michel

Saint Bernard founded Clairvaux Abbey and created the Cistercian Order which in the twelfth century dug the cellars of nearby Urville where Drappier champagnes are now left to age, so it is no surprise that the current director talks about his wines with religious zeal. Brother Bernard is also said to have brought Pinot Noir to Urville. Michel's grandfather made this the most important base wine for Drappier champagne, earning him the title 'Père Pinot' («Father Pinot»). «Pinot Noir creates wines for the heart, not for the head. It merges into the body and opens up the soul. Close your eyes and listen and you will hear it throbbing in your blood.» He stops, puts his ear to the wooden Fuder barrel holding the most recent vintage, and converses with his wine.

**Founding year** 1808 | **Owner** Michel Drappier

**Own vineyards** 56 hectares | **Purchased area** 50 hectares

**Annual production** 1.5 million bottles | **Chef de Cave** Yannick Desmarest

**Top Cuvées** Carte d'Or, Brut Nature Zéro Dosage, Millésime d'Exception, Grande Sèndrée, Quattuor (Blanc de Quatre Blancs), Cuvée Charles de Gaulle




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*«Do you know why this charming wine bubbles over in a sparkling flash without hardly a move of the hand? Bacchus is vainly trying to tame rebellious love in his bottle; love always breaks free in the hand of someone beautiful.»*

Kardinal François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis 1715 to 1794

*Champagne and  
eroticism or where Madame  
bathed her jewel*



Champagne is certainly outwardly full of erotic symbolism, as can be seen in the lines written by the cheerful prelate Bernis and dedicated to the (apparently difficult to kindle) Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV's legendary mistress. However, provided that it is enjoyed in moderation, beneath its cap champagne is also an aphrodisiac when it effervesces with exuberance. Is this poetry or truth? Let us take a (brief and thus admittedly very superficial) detour into sexual medicine.

As well as blood, two further substances are required for an erection, namely carbon monoxide and nitrogen monoxide. These are refined from an amino acid called arginine. Arginine is found in mature champagne in more than small quantities, together with other substances offering a positive effect on both male and female libidos: trace elements and sugar, of which even dry champagne can contain up to 15 grams per litre, boost recovery after a joyful pillow fight.

Both male and female bon vivants have long been aware of this, for at least as long as champagne has been in existence, without the need for medical studies. Curval, the hero of the Marquis de Sade's «The 120 Days of Sodom», locks himself in a room with «Fanchon, Marie and Desgranges and 30 bottles of champagne» to celebrate an endless orgy. In 1836, Parisian writer Arsène Houssaye (1814-1896) - Charles Baudelaire's mentor to whom the cycle «Spleen de Paris» is dedicated - became acquainted with a charming young Irish girl in a London tavern. «Because I dislike beer», he writes in his memoirs, «I ordered a bottle of champagne. (...) This appeared to amount to a gallant declaration, as she threw herself into my arms like a shrinking bird.»

Champagne-sipping phalocrats existed long before James Bond conquered Hollywood, and Marilyn Monroe, who claimed to be fond of champagne baths, was simply reviving an old custom. Edward VII, Prince of Wales and heir to the British throne (1841 to 1910) who stripped off all court etiquette whenever he managed to escape the keen ears of his puritanical mother Victoria for a couple of days, had a copper bath tub installed in the «Chambre Séparée» of his favourite Parisian local the «Chabanais» where his playmates could recuperate from the exertions of the oldest profession in the world in a champagne bath. In the verses of poet Vesselier («The Bidet», 1800), upon being questioned by his master about what happened to the 200 bottles of champagne which were ordered but never all drunk, chef Ducrot admits: «the rest were for Madame's bidet». To which the master answers: «Oh, what a woman! It is no surprise that whatever I say, her jewel commits new acts of stupidity every day.»

# Great celebration champagnes



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## CHAMPAGNE DIÉBOLT VALLOIS

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are regularly singled out by VINUM.  
We are currently marketing 2005  
vintage champagne in particular.

**Swiss importer**  
Grands Châteaux, La Conversion,  
Phone 021 796 16 80

**German importers**  
• Georg Hack, Meersburg am  
Bodensee, Phone 07532 49450,  
• Wolfgang Wuttke  
Saarbrücken, Phone 0681 700803  
• Wein nach Mass  
Erlangen, Phone 0170 90 25 781  
• Nicola Neumann, München

**Austrian importers**  
• Le Cru, Wien, Phone 01 53 34 79 10  
• Schelling Weine, Bregenz  
• Weinhaus der Gallier, Graz  
• Perlage, Wien

## Looking for a great champagne for the festive season?

The winemakers advertised here comply with the strict selection criteria of the VINUM wine guide.

CHAMPAGNE  
**DE SAINT GALL**  
*de Saint-Gall*

Champagne  
de Saint Gall

## A unique terroir for top-quality champagne!

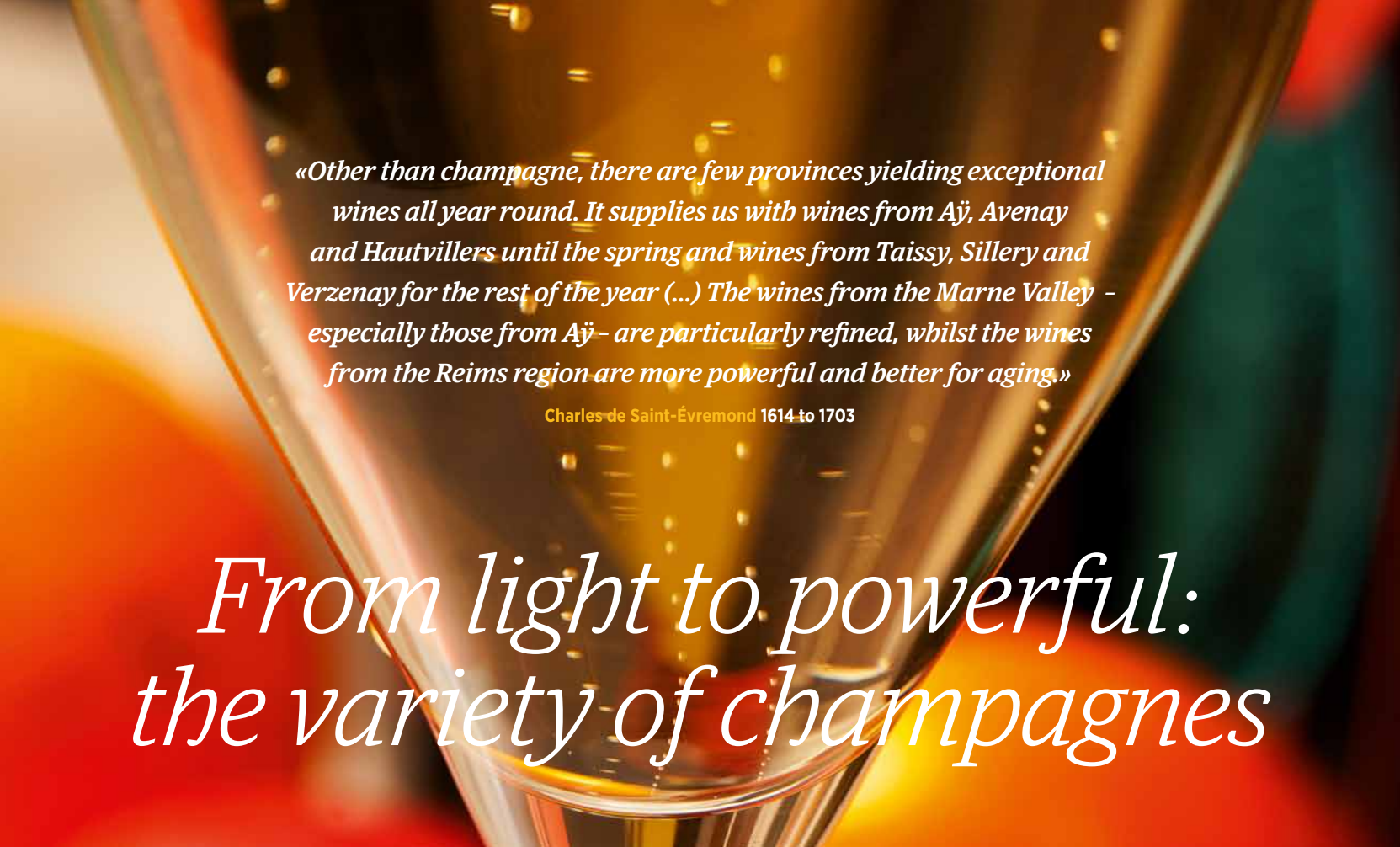
The broad spectrum of wines with particularly long aging in deep cellars, the various prestige bottles (Cuvée Orpale, Collection Doucet) and the gift boxes all offer the professional public a rich range of Premier and Grand Cru Champagne at a level of quality demonstrated time and again in national and international competitions. Wines to discover or rediscover!



### German supplier

Champagne De Saint Gall GmbH  
Lebacher Str. 4  
66113 Saarbrücken  
Phone 0681 9963 75

Excessive alcohol consumption is hazardous to the health.  
Drink responsibly.



*«Other than champagne, there are few provinces yielding exceptional wines all year round. It supplies us with wines from Ajy, Avenay and Hautvillers until the spring and wines from Taissy, Sillery and Verzenay for the rest of the year (...) The wines from the Marne Valley – especially those from Ajy – are particularly refined, whilst the wines from the Reims region are more powerful and better for aging.»*

Charles de Saint-Évremond 1614 to 1703

# *From light to powerful: the variety of champagnes*

When I tackled my very first champagne article many, many moons ago and thus wanted to arrange a tasting, the largest house in the industry refused to participate. The reason given was the title of the exposé: «the variety of champagnes». «We do not recognise the plural», was their curt answer. «In our view, there is only champagne». Just a few years later, the champagne wine council's new image campaign announced «there is no champagne, there are only champagnes», which left me with a triumphant smirk despite myself.

This change from an endlessly reproducible industrial product dreamt of (and never fully realised) during the boom years by a couple of top managers who most likely earned their spurs on washing powder or lemonade is perhaps the best chapter of this delving into clefts and chasms of champagne history. Thanks to better knowledge of the dubious terroir, sites and spots of Montagne de Reims, the Marne Valley, the Côte des Blancs and also the Aube and Aisne, thanks to increasingly well trained palates able to distinguish even the subtlest of differences, and last but not least thanks to the slowly developing culture of champagne, we now have an entire spectrum of styles to choose from. (At the risk of repeating myself, this champagne culture still has further room for improvement: why are connoisseurs happy to trade their grandmothers for half a dozen bottles of, say, medium-level yet outrageously expensive Bordeaux which

they then have to lower into the cellar for at least 20 years, waiting time used to complete university studies on how to correctly pair the wines with the right dishes, but not for a couple of bottles of a truly great champagne which tastes good even shortly after being purchased, goes with literally everything and can still be left to age for a few years? There is nothing wrong with Bordeaux, but doing one does not preclude the other.)

The spectrum ranges from light, uncomplicated Brut via elegant, ready-to-drink Millésimé from a good vintage such as 2004 to complex top cuvées from vintages such as 1996, 2002 or 2008; from wines with a high proportion of Pinot via sophisticated blends to Chardonnay varietals; from well-balanced composite wines representing the entire geography of the Champagne region to witty, characterful single site wines; from entirely undosed bottles to delicately sweet examples, from vintages of freshness and minerality (2004) via those of balance (2000, 2007) to those of richness (2005, 2003).

The cup is still far from running over. Every fan will be able to find champagnes to suit their taste and budget, with suggestions offered over the coming pages. For current and budding champagne fans alike we have compiled an almost entirely comprehensive selection of the best, most exclusive, most legendary, most classic cuvées, wine available to buy now, wines which everyone should know and be able to afford on occasion - in the glass, not the bathtub.

SWISS  
PREMIUM  
SELECTION



EIN HAUCH VON LUXUS.

ARKINA UND RHÄZÜNSER  
PRÄSENTIEREN DIE NEUE UND EINZIGARTIGE  
«SWISS PREMIUM SELECTION»



MADE IN CHAMPAGNE  
MADE WITH PASSION  
MADE FOR EMOTION



"A MOSAIC OF TERROIR  
GRAPES AND EXPERTISE  
BY CHAMPAGNE JACQUART"

# 69

## *top sparkling picks every champagne lover should know*

**H**ere they are, the best sparkling wines in the world. To produce this hit parade, we have gone through an extraordinarily strict selection process to ensure that you are presented with only truly the very best currently available on the market. Only very few bottles were left out, either because they are only available in limited quantities, because there are no current cuvées (Bollinger Vieille Vigne Française, Krug Clos du Mesnil, Billecart Clos Saint-Hilaire) or because the champagne houses were not able or willing to participate in the tasting for technical reasons (Henriot, Pommery). As these are all (past, present and future) legends which every champagne lover should know, we have had to severely restrict the involvement of winemakers and small businesses. In any event, the selection was made based not only on the actual quality of the wine but also and especially on its degree of prominence. NB: these exceptional wines were not tasted in one or two eternally long and sense-numbing sittings; instead, we split them into small groups of maximum six wines for in-depth evaluation and therefore devoted huge amounts of time to the process,

time which had to be granted to each handmade product to offer a fitting assessment. We never forget that although champagne promises sparkling, joyful, light enjoyment, it is above all a great and unique wine.

Champagnes are generally disgorged (yeast removed, wine bottled and given its final cork) a couple of months before shipping, so reach the market ready to drink and do not require any further laying down. We therefore do not usually state estimated drinking periods. However, as many of the greatest champagnes in the world can and sometimes even should be left to age for a couple of years after disgorgement, we have made an exception. This information should be used with care and relates to wines disgorged between late 2013 and late summer 2014. If you are looking for a more precise number, ask a trusted wine merchant for the disgorgement date if this is not displayed on the bottle (as is generally the case)!



# 14 absolute legends

## worth the occasional treat

*This section presents the crème de la crème of the great champagne currently available: historic cuvées from top historic labels and exclusive cellar treasures which you will dream about for a long time.*

### Champagne Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin Cave Privée Vintage Brut Rosé 1990 20 points | to 2016

One of the biggest advantages of top champagne brands is that they have a seemingly inexhaustible supply of (base) wines at their disposal, and in quantitatively good vintages (which is as always synonymous with quality in champagne) they can place unblended wines or finished champagnes into reserves which will only be marketed in small quantities after decades have passed, to the great delight of lovers of mature champagne. Veuve Clicquot's Cave Privée is delighting with magnificent bottles such as the 1989 (see below) and this exceptional Rosé 1990. What is interesting about these cellar treasures is their capacity to mature and the opportunity to follow a brand's style back through the years. The 1990, the child of a great and sunny vintage, is a beautiful illustration of the Pinot-heavy style of Veuve wine with its subtle ripe Burgundy bouquet – quince, toasted notes, pastry, strawberry, cinnamon and mint. Melting onto the palate, you will be astounded to find any carbon dioxide, expecting instead a red wine in the style of an old Rioja Gran Reserva; everything is so elegant and harmonious that you will wonder whether rosé champagnes simply need a long, long period of aging to become great. What we originally considered quirks have now turned out to be true gems: creamy, refined, full-bodied, perfectly structured, with great finesse of aroma and flavour.

### Champagne Deutz Cuvée William Deutz 2002 20 points | to 2018

The know-it-alls are not wrong: Deutz is not actually one of the great, old historic top labels. The house would fit equally well among the classics or the trailblazers and conquerors of recent years. However, this absolutely outstanding cuvée from this absolutely outstanding vintage will go down in champagne history as an absolute legend.

We have been eager fans of Deutz fizz and regular consumers of both the top cuvées and the Cuvée Classic ever since Fabrice Rosset took the reins nearly 20 years ago. He understands how to market wines of great transparency, precision and elegance without betraying the Deutz style. Deutz wines are not just exceptionally made, but also remain affordable when measured against their quality and purity of style. This also applies to the Cuvée William Deutz 2002, now at its apogee: a superb fruity and spicy bouquet with no hint of clumsiness, some mineral notes, a touch of yellow plum; a perfect balance of sophistication and full body, fruitiness and minerality on the palate, possible only in the truly great vintages, in a stunningly generously sensual style which is perfect now... Absolute top quality for fans of mature champagne shaped by Pinot Noir rather than Chardonnay.



## Champagne Dom Pérignon Vintage 1998 19.5 points | Bis 2016

Dom Pérignon, the champagne of the rich and beautiful (and secret agent James Bond), is virtually the legend to end all legends. Whilst there have been times when this cuvée has not entirely lived up to its specifications, these have long been a thing of the past. This holds true for the 1998, which we have never tasted in such fantastic form! It is not broad or weighty, but offers great transparency and finesse with delicate, refreshing acidity and the unbelievable rancio bouquet found in only very few great champagnes as it requires a complex blend and a long period of aging in perfect conditions. With notes of butter, hazelnut, exotic and citrus fruits, pastry and spice. Magnificent for a special moment among people important to you, accompanied only by a few light, elegant appetisers.

## Champagne Charles Heidsieck Blanc des Millénaires 1995 19 points | to 2016

For years we have been afraid of the moment that this magnificent cuvée from the 1995 vintage sells out. Thankfully (for us), real champagne culture and fans of perfectly mature fizz have remained a niche, and Charles Heidsieck in Reims has deep cellars. This means that we can once again mention this exceptional wine, a perfect illustration that champagne is a great cultural product and that no other sparkling wine in the world achieves this perfect balance of smoothness and freshness, spice and elegance, complexity and lightness. Do without a restaurant meal, get hold of a bottle (from experience, the 150 Euro price tag is a bargain!) and surprise your loved one. There is no more beautiful declaration of love.

## Champagne Krug Millésimé 2000 19 points | 2015

The two Krug Millésimés tasted could not be more different, proof that vintages are not a marketing gimmick but an exciting reality of consumption. The 2002, a good but not a top vintage in Champagne, has the chiselled quality of a Krug (meaning connoisseurs can save a couple of years of waiting) with discreet rancio aromas, vanilla, hazelnuts, a touch of citrus fruit, immensely creamy, delicate, rounded and sagacious on the palate – now fully mature and to be enjoyed.

## Champagne Dom Ruinart Blanc de Blancs 2004 19 points | 2015

In many champagne rankings, Dom Ruinart is listed behind its fellow Dom (Pérignon) and behind Roederer's Cristal. We rate it at least at the same level (in particular in the greatest vintages) as a textbook example of an elegant, precisely composed, transcendent Blanc de Blancs. The 2004 vintage was not officially one of the absolute top vintages, with wines offering more elegance than fullness. However, the Dom seems to have ignored these specifications. With hints of vanilla, nuts, flowers, angelica and butter as well as toasted notes, its bouquet offers us all we expect of a beautifully mature, exquisite champagne. It captivates on the palate with slender, straightforward minerality and crystal-clear focused construction, but also creaminess and excitement. Exceptionally authentic, fantastically made, magnificent. For times of love.

## Champagne Bollinger R.D. 2002 19 points | 2016 to 2020

The fact that Bollinger has defended its status as a label positioned just behind Krug for decades is primarily thanks to this wine, which unlike the 'normal' vintage is sold after a long period of aging. The difference between the indeed excellent, likable 2004 and the late disgorged 2002 is abundantly clear. If not left to age further, this wine will taste still youthful, lively, complex, intense, crystal clear, straightforward, with the grapefruit finish of great Bollinger years; the typical smoky, fruity and mineral Bollinger flavour is still to develop. A magnificent wine best left for another year or two. The score recognises less its current state than its huge potential. Those wanting to enjoy it now would benefit from decanting the wine 20 minutes before serving.

## Champagne Krug Grande Cuvée 19 points | to 2016

The Grande Cuvée blended from up to 50 base wines from different vintages may 'only' be a BSA, or non-vintage brut, but it often exceeds the vintage bottlings in terms of complexity, authenticity, harmony and elegance. This is again the case here: the Grande Cuvée keeps pace with the vintages currently available (and is perhaps even a small step ahead). Once again this subtle, fruity and ripe, exceptionally complex, perfectly balanced fizz is in our view the epitome of a great champagne.



**Champagne Pol Roger**  
**Winston Churchill 2002**  
19 points | to 2016

This cuvée embodies the sublimation of the Pol Roger style, and the 2002 has reached its peak and represents one of the best vintages of this exceptional wine: superb bouquet, lemony, mineral, complex, with a touch of fine rancio and floral notes; elegant, transparent, with fine perlage, creamy, chiselled in style but not without wrinkles, distinguished, with substance, finesse and pleasant nobility, and a magnificently juicy citrus fruit finish; fantastic now, for amorous moments.

**Champagne Louis Roederer**  
**Cristal 2006**  
19 points | to 2018

Roederer is Cristal and Cristal is Roederer, representing a very particular style expressing not the axiom of power and fullness but instead lightness and transparency (often meaning slight disappointment for Cristal novices). However, greatness is not measured in quantity! A superb, exceptionally discreet, precise bouquet of minerals, vanilla, flowers and yellow plum, all very reserved, elegant, hugely refined, enticing; straightforward and hugely exciting on the palate, once again with great finesse, creamy, transcendent, with literally crystal-clear exquisite freshness and great length, perfectly proportioned: the most beautiful, indeed stylish, authentic Cristal of recent years, exceeding the 2002 in terms of precision and expression. Enjoy now in a still, contemplative moment with your loved one. Stunning!

**Champagne Krug**  
**Rosé**  
19 points | to 2020

Krug (also) interprets rosé in inimitable fashion, with complexity and ripeness, depth and unique spice. The Pinot proportion here creates not red berry aromas but dreamy hints of rancio with a touch of balsamic vinegar or amontillado, nuts, morels. With a perfect, rounded construction in the palate and a soft bitter note in the lingering finish. Drinkers first and foremost have plenty of Krug in their glass and a rosé fizz second, making it exactly what you would expect from this historic top brand. Magnificent, inimitable, one of the best rosés of them all and the most individual.

**Champagne Lanson**  
**Lanson Vintage Collection 1976**  
19 points | to 2016

We tasted this stunning champagne as a magnum for the second time in a row, and with the same pleasure. There are rarely enough opportunities to enjoy mature champagne which is still full of life: aromas of white chocolate, stewed apricot and oriental spice. Its fullness, well supported by a refined but still perceptible framework of acidity, is the perfect gift for champagne fans who love something special.

**Champagne Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin**  
**Vintage Brut Cave Privée 1989**  
18.5 points | 2015

Just like the Rosé 1990, the 1989 also surprised us with its extremely vinous style, coming more into its own due not least to the refined carbon dioxide, and in line with the style we expect from this brand. There is plenty of Pinot Noir on the palate in sophisticated, juicy and mineral style, with a currant and gooseberry finish. The complex bouquet still needs some time. Open the bottle 30 minutes before serving and allow yourself a small glass so that the wine can breathe. You will be rewarded with magnificent rancio notes, leather, porcini mushrooms, nougat, vanilla and dried fruit, borne up by the wine's steely acidity. Despite all of the wine's authenticity and sophistication, we can see the progress made in the Champagne region over the last 25 years. This is not a reproach but in fact great praise for the current winemakers.

**Champagne Philipponnat**  
**Clos des Goisses 2005**  
18 points | to 2016

With your eyes closed it would be easy to mistake this for a red wine with its complex, fruity and spicy strawberry notes together with a touch of Jamaica pepper, pastry, toast and a little coffee. This impression of a red wine is repeated on the palate with an almost oily texture seeming to virtually drown the bubbles, meaty, crisp, full-bodied, giving the impression of sucking on fruit flesh. An unusual Clos most likely best enjoyed in this phase, although it could still mature. This differentiates it from the other vintage of this cuvée which should be left to age for a little longer after delivery.



*Typically Charles*



CHAMPAGNE  
**CHARLES  
HEIDSIECK**

*Maison fondée à Reims en 1851*

Champagne Charles Heidsieck is amongst the most awarded wines in the world. What makes these wines so unique? The exceptional proportion of 40% reserve wines, with an average age of 10 years; more than three years ageing in rare and imposing Roman chalk cellars; and the personality of its founder, Charles Heidsieck who, like his champagne, had style, depth – and character.

*DAC*



## *11 trailblazers to rival the legends*

*The brands in this category may not (yet) have achieved legendary status, but they include rising stars of the last 20 years whose wines represent some of the best currently available from Champagne, history or no.*

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**Champagne Gosset Celebris Extra Brut 2002**  
**20 points | to 2017**

Whilst many 2002s – as magnificent as they may taste – should be slowly but surely enjoyed, this wine has only just reached its top form and is leaving everything else we have tasted from this vintage in the shade. A stunningly complex, elegant bouquet of minerals and spice, the perfect balance of freshness, juiciness, sophistication, density, elegance and length, spirit, power and character, with an endlessly lingering grapefruit finish. Almost granite straightforwardness. One of the greatest champagnes we have ever tasted – it left us speechless.

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**Champagne Billecart Salmon Nicolas François Billecart 2002**  
**19 points | 2016 to 2020**

Billecart champagnes have structure and are designed for long aging. Closed in style if opened too early. At their peak, they offer indescribable complexity. We attribute further reserves to the 2002, and believe that it will reach 20-point quality in two or three years' time and even keep for a couple of decades if disgorged late! However, connoisseurs will still enjoy this wine now and delight in the beginnings of elegant rancio spice, the herbal and floral touches, the exceptional finesse on the palate paired with minerality and sophistication, character and density, but they should also cellar a couple of bottles to be opened in three or four years once the wine has reached full maturity.

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**Champagne Jacquesson Dzy Corne Bautray 2004**  
**19 points | to 2016**

Within two decades Jacquesson has gone from an illustrious unknown to a challenger to Krug and Co., and not with wines designed to suit everyone but rather sometimes beautifully stubborn, vinous single-site bottles requiring long periods of aging. Our favourite of the single-site wines from this vintage is this undosed Chardonnay champagne from a special spot in Montagne de Reims: also very elegant but significantly more mineral than the Vauzelle Terme, more complex, with a delicately spicy exotic fruit finish... Magnificent.

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**Champagne Jacquesson Cuvée 733 Dégorgement Tardif**  
**19 points | to 2017**

Jacquesson does everything differently. Their successive bottlings of BSA blends are numbered in a rising sequence, and 736 and 737 are currently on the market: despite significant stylistic similarities, we slightly prefer the more powerful, fuller-bodied 737. However, the real hit among the 700s is the late disgorged 733, once again also available in small quantities, demonstrating that nothing can beat slow, peaceful aging in the world of great champagne. A particularly complex bouquet with magnificent bottle age, juicy, rounded and complex, with great freshness and harmony.

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**Champagne Jacquesson Avize Champ Cain 2004**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2018**

Superb bouquet of flowers and star fruit, juicy and powerful on the palate with an intense finish: this 100% Chardonnay single-site cuvée from Côte des Blancs appears more youthful than the other two bottlings with a rather more strongly developed, clearly defined Chardonnay bouquet. Would deal well with one or two more years in the bottle and could still gain another half point.

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**Champagne Jacquesson Aÿ Vauzelle Terme 2004**  
**18 points | to 2016**

The powerful and vinous character of truly great vintages is offset in this champagne with juiciness, freshness and a particular elegance only very rarely found in Pinot cuvées. Crystal clear on the palate, exceptionally fruity, transcendent, long, with a delicate red berry finish. A magnificent wine to be served with creative cuisine.

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**Champagne Jacques Selosse Version Originale (VO)**  
**18 points | to 2015**

Anselme Selosse, one of the few winemakers keeping pace with the big brands in terms of quality and image, has gained a strong reputation as a maker of spicy, sometimes very oak-influenced, often rather oxidative cuvées. However, this is only part of the truth: his wines also have character and independence, particularly this undosed VO, disgorged in October 2013. Light gold in colour, it has a spicy nose of pastry and nuts supported by smoky, floral and spicy herb notes and an immensely vinous, full, creamy construction perfectly aerating the fine perlage and ensuring additional freshness, with a full and lingering finish. A must for fans of this effusive style.

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**Champagne Drappier Grande Sèndrée 2006**  
**17.5 points | to 2016**

Drappier did not make things easy for us. Which category does this champagne house fall under? The brand is not yet a true classic, but is more than an insider's tip. One thing is certain: Drappier's wines taste better to us as they go on and our enjoyment of them is increasingly unrestrained, which is why chose to categorise the house as a trailblazer. With this top cuvée from the 2006 vintage, perfect now, elegant, creamy, sophisticated and hugely fresh, precisely made and exceptionally delicious, Drappier is confidently defending its position: no sooner is the bottle open than it is empty. Thankfully, this wine is also available in a magnum! Let us not forget: Drappier has worked for its reputation as an excellent producer of magnums («just the right format for two», as the owner mischievously puts it), regularly also offered for older vintages.

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**Champagne Drappier Grande Sèndrée Rosé 2006**  
**17 points | to 2017**

We have a few reservations regarding the fashion for rosé champagne, but we have to confess that the quality of these champagnes is continuing to grow. This holds true for the premium cuvée from this top Aube-based company. Seductive red berry spice, herbs, spices, flowers, particularly light on the palate, creamy, juicy, surprisingly elegant in line with the vintage, crystalline, with a discreetly spicy berry finish. A magnificent rosé.

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**Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte Palmes d'Or Brut Millésimé 2004**  
**17 points | to 2016**

Great or not, Nicolas Feuillatte is a high flyer who has reached the peak in only 30 years, making him an example to all cooperative companies. This holds true for his reliable basic wines but even more so for the high-end cuvées whose packaging we have been cursing for years (although we are apparently alone in this) and which we systematically decant for the table, good for the wine in every respect and perfectly demonstrating its exquisite clarity, sophistication, freshness, minerality and elegance as well as its magnificent bouquet of flowers, herbs and citrus fruit. Ideal with seafood.

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**Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte Palmes d'Or Rosé Millésimé 2005**  
**17 points | to 2017**

This cuvée represents a particularly effusive style of wine, which despite being rather intrusive when served alone as an aperitif, tastes magnificent with hard cheese or spicy dishes such as North African or Mediterranean cuisine – with a pizza or a barbecue. An intense bouquet of red berries, raspberry, currants, and also spice and a touch of cinnamon: the nose of a light red wine! Juicy and crisp on the palate despite its boisterous fullness, spirited.

# 15 sparkling picks for value-seekers

*Great champagne does not have to be expensive: wines offering good value for money are available from some top cooperatives and are sold by small and medium sized wineries. What they lack in reputation and brand power they make up for great content.*

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## **Champagne de Saint Gall**

**Orpale 2002**

**18 points | to 2017**

Whether we like it or not, when it comes to luxury and legends a famous name, a well-known brand and a popular label are all part of the overall impression and are equally valued. Saint Gall is not particularly well placed in this area: this brand from the Union de Champagne cooperative in Avize, initially formed of winemakers with prime sites in Côte des Blancs and a few Montagne de Reims villages, has only content to rely on. It is of good parentage and still beautifully packaged. We particularly rate the Orpale Chardonnay cuvée from the 2002 vintage, tasted again here with an increased score, quite simply one of the best Blanc de Blancs available (in a field containing Dom Ruinart, Blanc des Millénaires and Comtes de Champagne!) with a superb, crystal clear, mineral bouquet, elegant, creamy, true to its style, complex, tempting, transparent, chiselled, with supporting yet refined acidity. Magnificent now as an aperitif for time with loved ones, without the hype of a label.

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## **Champagne Diebolt Vallois**

**Fleur de Passion 2006**

**18 points | 2015**

For two decades, we have also considered Fleur de Passion from Jacques Diebolt from the Grand Cru commune of Cramant to be one of the best, most stylish Chardonnay cuvées around. This holds true for the 2006 vintage, best enjoyed before the end of the summer 2015: a superb, fruity, floral, mineraly fresh, fully developed bouquet; airy and juicy on the palate, wonderfully slender, crystal clear, elegant with particular length and freshness, perfect now.

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## **Champagne Pierre Gimonnet & Fils**

**Millésime de Collection (Magnum) 2005**

**18 points | to 2017**

Pierre Gimonnet is a winemaker who not only provides quality work but also consistently produces authentic wines – here Blancs de Blancs – which do not deny their origins. A year ago we rated this magnum bottling favourably for its potential rather than its current state. The year of additional maturation has benefited the wine: the authentic expression of its terroir remains but the whole has gained harmony, depth, sophistication and



fullness, combining to form a magnificent and elegant sparkling wine. More than worth its price tag. Be careful: only tiny quantities are produced!

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## **Champagne Veuve Fourny**

**Clos Faubourg Notre-Dame 2004**

**18 points | 2016 to 2020**

The Fourny brothers (and sons of the widow Veuve Fourny) are some of the most talented champagne producers around – and given their location in Vertus at the farthest corner of Côte des Blancs, an area which must be content with Premier Cru classification, they have doubled and tripled their efforts to produce great wines and pursue classifications ad absurdum. Their mini cuvée, unfortunately only produced in tiny quantities (fewer than 2000 bottles), clearly possesses Grand Cru character and is one of the most individual champagnes available: reticent but exceptionally complex, this is a type of champagne which gains expression when decanted, offering delicate then increasingly spicy notes of rancio, flowers and pastry. Superb style on the palate with untamed spirit, impressive length with a lingering, spicy citrus finish; full of character, an immensely well-structured wine which can be left to age for a long time. For fans of sophistication and freshness. Enjoy with a veal cutlet.

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## **Champagne Veuve Fourny**

**Les Rougemonts**

**18 points | to 2018**

Even when tasted among other eminent examples, this raspberry-red seducer is one of the best rosé champagnes available. It has the bouquet of a mature Burgundy (Mercurey) with notes of red berries but also pastry, almond, vanilla and smoke, and its finely measured texture is ripe and vinous, perfectly balanced, with great aromatic length. Vertus, the Premier Cru of the Côte des Blancs which also produces interesting Pinots, here shines with particular consistency, sophistication, lightness and absolutely unique character. Improves once decanted, replaces a red wine, could age.

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## **Champagne A.R. Lenoble**

**Brut Blanc de Blancs Gentilhomme 2006**

**17.5 points | to 2017**

This little-known family business based in Damery (Marne Valley) but with vines in Chouilly (Côte des Blancs) and Bisseuil (Montagne de Reims) is currently run by Anne and her brother Antoine Malassagne, producing

particularly characterful sparkling wines. Its flagship is this rare Chardonnay cuvée which holds its own among the great champagnes in terms of quality. A superb, complex, spicy and fruity bouquet, a lovely, tempting mixture of red apple and hazelnut with floral and mineral notes; juicy, crisp, fresh, immensely harmonious and refreshing in style with a long, youthful, fruity finish; could be left to age.

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**Champagne de Sousa****Cuvée des Caudalies Le Mesnil 2005****17.5 points | to 2016**

Legendary reputations are occasionally gained by champagnes from small producers which have limited distribution due to modest production quantities, and Sousa from Avize (Côte des Blancs Grand Cru) is one such wine. Its Cuvée des Caudalies, made from base wines from the commune of Les Mesnil and named after the unit measuring a wine's duration on the palate, is only marketed in a run of 1500 bottles. It is a particularly impressive, vinous, characterful champagne with fullness, bite and length. The 2005 is now perfectly mature and would also pair well with more powerful dishes.

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**Champagne Henri Giraud****Aÿ Grand Cru Fût de Chêne****17.5 points | 2015**

Henri Giraud has developed a solid reputation as a master of oak maturation, using local oak from the forests of Argonne and actively working to preserve the area's oak population. However, he is actually a master of Pinot Noir from the historic (and perhaps top) Grand Cru location of Aÿ in Montagne de Reims. It is thanks to his top-quality base wines that the Pinot Noir tolerates the oak and is not simply beaten down. His rare Fût de Chêne is astoundingly refined (not least thanks to its fine perlage) with perfectly measured, unobtrusive, noble oak spice, perfectly mature, with a soft bitter note and great harmony. Enjoy now with spicy, Asian-influenced global cuisine. His other cuvées are also highly recommended.

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**Champagne Mailly****Grand Cru L'Intemporelle 2008****17.5 points | 2017 to 2020**

Mailly is a wine, a location and a village whose winemakers add their harvests to a small but excellent cooperative. Mailly is smaller than a Bordeaux Premier Cru, and similarly can only bottle wines from within its own boundaries, something which evidently forces the valiant cooperative members (the victims of their own success?) to market wines which could do with another couple of years to mature. On potential alone this Intemporelle would earn 18 points, but its current infanticidal stage is worth barely 17. Let us be clear: in the glass this is perhaps the greatest Intemporelle we have ever tasted, but it has simply reached the market four or five years too early. With a still reticent bouquet, closed due to its youth, superb and crystalline style on the palate, transparent and fresh, wonderfully long, with exceptional aging potential. Cellar and open in three or four years.

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**Champagne Mailly****Grand Cru Les Echansons 2004****17.5 points | 2016 to 2018**

Even the colour attests to the dominance of Pinot; an intense bouquet of spice and red berries, well-structured and vinous on the palate, spicy and juicy but also creamy thanks to the fine perlage, mineral, exceptionally made. Has personality, but this cuvée should also be left to age for a year or two.

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**Champagne Soutiran****Cuvée Perle Noire****17.5 points | to 2018**

The members of this entrepreneurial Soutiran clan from Ambonnay have not entirely realised their dream of following in Jacquesson's footsteps. However, they remain one of the best Pinot makers in Champagne, and

their Perle Noire in its provocative white bottle is in our view quite simply the best Blanc de Noirs on offer. But take note: Pinot cuvées shine with a spicy, meaty, vinous style, not with lightness and elegance, and the spicy, red-wine-esque nose of ceps and red berries will not be to everyone's taste. On the palate this is an uncompromising, full, intense, well-structured, juicy, intense, massive wine with a long, fruity but also exceptionally mineral finish. A wine for connoisseurs, with a meal, cheese, poultry, a veal cutlet, offal or cigars. Be careful, this is a sparkling wine like no other!

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**Champagne Cattier****Clos du Moulin****17 points | to 2017**

A clos is a vineyard enclosed by walls and Clos du Moulin is one of Champagne's rare single-site wines, harvested in Montagne de Reims from a 2.2-hectare plot once said to belong to officer of Louis XV. In order to fully express the site's character, the Cattier blenders always combine three vintages to form a cuvée – here 2005, 2006 and 2007. We have long been fans of this characterful, exceptionally made cuvée with sophistication and spirit, lingering on the palate with a red apple and berry finish, full-bodied yet magnificently crisp. It is suited to a variety of serving partners: pork, poultry and cheese in particular, but also global cuisine, calling for juiciness and fruitiness. Perhaps not exceptionally complex or lifted, but instead sprightly and individual.

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**Champagne Cattier****Clos du Moulin Rosé****17 points | to 2016**

The white Clos already offers notes of red berries in the glass, making you wonder if the proportion of Pinot in the rosé (around 10 percent of the red grape) is not too much of a good thing. However, Cattier works with great sensitivity and the discreet raspberry note is spot on, with a jocular and slightly sweet finish. Would replace a light red wine, with quiche (Lorraine), suckling pig or hard cheese. A truly miniature production of only 4000 bottles.

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**Champagne Leclerc Briant****Cuvée Divine Solera 2004****17 points | to 2017**

Pinot Meunier is a misunderstood variety generally only used as a substitute. It only achieves a particular level of class in a few sites in the Marne Valley, where it turns out extremely fruity with characteristic hints of elderflowers. That is exactly the aroma of this cuvée from the biodynamically cultivated vineyards of this medium-sized high-quality business. This characterful, intense, juicy sparkling wine may not be to everyone's taste as it is so distinctive, and as Pinot Noir (meatiness) and Chardonnay (minerality) only play second fiddle. However, we love uncompromising wines with a story to tell.

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**Champagne Mandois****Victor Vieilles Vignes 2005****16 points | 2015**

Good does not have to mean expensive, which is why we have also included this cuvée from an exceptionally run small business in our exclusive round. We especially like the particular fruitiness provided by Marne Valley Chardonnay, with its floral style reminiscent of elderflowers, here paired with the fullness of the vintage. Perfect as an aperitif with nibbles or a quiche (Lorraine).



# 28 classics

which have made (and are still making) history

*A brand's strength lies not just in the contents, but also in the story it tells. Of course, stories alone can never replace quality: at their best they simply enhance it with a long-standing identity.*

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#### **Champagne Bollinger**

##### **Grande Année 2004**

**18 points | to 2016**

This wine is all elegant reticence, beginning in the delicately smoky nose combining fruity and mineral notes. Pinot Noir dominates on the palate but with great refinement and elegance, and the flavours in the finish reflect the bouquet. A great wine to explore and enjoy.

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#### **Champagne Bollinger**

##### **Grande Année Rosé 2004**

**18 points | to 2016**

The rosé also demonstrates finesse and elegance. The addition of Pinot is only perceptible in the bouquet and the finish, adding currant aromas and greater juiciness and breadth, putting the 2004 in good stead. The whole remains transparent and stylish.

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#### **Champagne Deutz**

##### **William Deutz Rosé 2002**

**18 points | to 2018**

Similar in style to the white William Deutz but with greater spirit, more youthful, crisper, juicier, with its solid construction and red apple finish, but also less transcendent and lifted. With grilled dishes, a summer meal.

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#### **Champagne Deutz**

##### **Amour de Deutz 2005**

**18 points | 2015**

Elegantly creamy and transparent in style as you would expect of this cuvée, and for us clearly one of the best wines of the vintage – but should be enjoyed now as an intimate aperitif.

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#### **Champagne Dom Ruinart Rosé**

##### **Millésimé 2002**

**18 points | 2015 to 2017**

Has the airiness, transparency, serenity and ripeness of the classic Dom, with the red addition offering delicately spicy yet unobtrusive bottle age. Absolutely top quality! Perfect as an aperitif or with creative cuisine.

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#### **Champagne Duval Leroy**

##### **Femme de Champagne 2000**

**18 points | 2015**

Carol Duval heads one of the greatest champagne houses, and her Cuvée Femme de Champagne is blended by cellar master Sandrine Logette-Jardin from Côte de Blancs Grands Crus. The 2000 is the most beautiful and consistent illustration of this concept so far, floral and mineral, clearly dominated by Chardonnay, with delicate spice and pleasant bottle age, delicate, wonderfully refined.

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#### **Champagne Krug**

##### **Millésimé 2003**

**18 points | 2015**

Compared to the creamy, delicate 2000, the 2003 is much fruitier, fuller and more youthful and the classic Krug touch only emerges after some aeration. An interesting, idiosyncratic champagne, perhaps better suited to insiders not wanting to miss any Krug vintage.

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#### **Champagne Piper-Heidsieck**

##### **Rare 2002**

**18 points | to 2017**

Captivates with its magnificent bouquet of vanilla and pastry, delicate rancio notes with hints of exotic fruit, an exquisite, elegant, transparent, creamy Chardonnay-based structure and an airy, refreshing finish. For a convivial aperitif.

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#### **Champagne Veuve Clicquot**

##### **Ponsardin**

##### **La Grande Dame 2004**

**18 points | to 2016**

What the 2004 lacks in terms of the absolute size of the truly great years, it makes up for in transparency and clean style. We particularly like the flawless, crystal clear currant finish, also found in the rosé with the great Pinot variety apparent.

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#### **Champagne Veuve Clicquot**

##### **Ponsardin**

##### **La Grande Dame Rosé 2004**

**18 points | to 2016**

This is not all that different in colour to the 1990s presented earlier, coppery but with a slightly lower proportion of yellow. Very delicate and clean on the nose, a touch of raspberry, a hint of allspice, redcurrants, with airy perlage and elegant construction. A refined, perfectly balanced rosé.

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#### **Champagne de Venoge**

##### **Louis XV Grand Cru 2006**

**17.5 points | to 2016**

De Venoge, now part of the Lanson BCC group, has improved significantly since 2005. This is excellently illustrated by a comparison of the top cuvées from 1996 and 2006, harmonious, fruity, crisp, with a delicious yellow plum finish and a touch of pineapple and citrus. Pair with a light meal or drink as an aperitif.

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#### **Champagne Dom Pérignon**

##### **Rosé Vintage 2003**

**17.5 points | 2015**

The DP Rosé 2003 has now reached its peak – we have increased its score slightly from last year. Its red berry aromas and ripeness suit it well and make it predestined to accompany top-quality hard cheese.



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**Champagne Perrier-Jouët  
Belle Epoque****Blanc de Blancs 2002  
17.5 points | to 2016**

A reticent, freshly mineral bouquet with herbal notes, very elegant on the palate, airy, wonderfully creamy, slender and delicate, with a lovely citrus finish. A stylish bubbly, perfect right now but also very expensive, for special occasions. Those just interested in the attractive bottle should stick to younger cuvées.

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**Champagne Perrier-Jouët  
Belle Epoque Rosé 2004****17.5 points | to 2016**

The quality of rosé champagnes is truly continuing to grow. This is particularly true of this magnificent wine, which we prefer to the white Belle Epoque 2006 for its exquisite elegance, unusually light and airy style, and refreshing raspberry finish. Whether it is worth the high price tag is something for you to decide.

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**Champagne Taittinger  
Comtes de Champagne 2005****17.5 points | to 2016**

In top years, the Comtes is one of the most refined sparkling wines there is. The 2005's unusually spicy bouquet of mocha pastry and butter therefore surprised us, illustrating that vintages really are governed by their circumstances. The floral and mineral hints we actually expected only developed after a little aeration. On the palate the wine was surprisingly fresh with its accustomed subtlety, but also unusually full-bodied with a markedly spicy vanilla and butter finish. The most full-bodied, opulent Comtes we have ever come across.

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**Champagne de Venoge  
Louis XV Grand Cru 1996****17 points | 2015**

A ripe, initially rather clumsy bouquet of wax, porcini mushrooms and leather, a contrast to the slightly pointed acidity and ripe fullness. After the tasting we served it in a different decanter\* – rather more carbon dioxide was lost but the contents tasted much richer, cleaner and better balanced. An interesting wine, of course technically not entirely on a par with the

2006, but remarkable for a mature champagne.

*\* We carefully decanted it into the previously emptied decanter used to supply the wine – more than just a flower vase!*

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**Champagne G.H. Mumm  
R.Lalou 1999****17 points | 2015**

This cuvée still remains exceptionally complex: a bouquet of ripe rancio, with mint, cinnamon, ripe berry, pepper and clove notes. The now fully chiselled texture is borne up by a delicate bitter note and perceptible minerality. The fact that this wine has reached its zenith and should be enjoyed now simply illustrates that time does not stand still.

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**Champagne Gosset  
Celebris Rosé Extra Brut 2007****17 points | 2017 to 2020**

In our opinion, all missing from this magnificently fruity wine clad in discreet raspberry notes, surprisingly steely and exceptionally straightforward in style with keen acidity and a juicy texture, is a little more maturity.

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**Champagne Lanson  
Extra Age Blanc de Blancs****17 points | to 2017**

In our virtual standards chart, Lanson is more a house of Pinot Noir, Montagne de Reims and the Marne Valley. It is therefore no surprise that the late-disgorged (Extra Age) Blanc de Blancs has turned out particularly juicy, even broad, full-bodied, meaty, fully ripe, although with the characteristic buttery and nutty Chardonnay bouquet.

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**Champagne Lanson  
Extra Age Brut****17 points | to 2020**

Lanson wines need to mature, something which has been taken into account for the Extra Age series. This Brut, disgorged in February 2014, has the sophistication and delicate bitter notes of a Black Label but greater polish and aromatic complexity, with hints of angelica, grapefruit and a touch of rancio. Character and class at a reasonable price.

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**Champagne Lanson  
Extra Age Brut Rosé****17 points | to 2018**

More youthful than the white version, sharper, denser, fully committed to the sophisticated Lanson style, and with crisp character shaped by Pinot. Its red berry bouquet suits it well – could mature, and would go well with grilled food, kebabs or hard cheese.

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**Champagne Louis Roederer  
Brut Vintage 2006****17 points | to 2018**

The Brut Vintage is very similar in style to the much more expensive Cristal. Straightforwardness, excitement, minerality and sophistication are all key attributes. The 2006 vintage offers elegance, and the high proportion of Pinot ensures a fruity style (grapefruit finish). Can be left to age a little and should still gain in complexity.

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**Champagne Perrier-Jouët  
Belle Epoque 2006****17 points | to 2016**

Belle Epoque's silk screen bottle with its floral pattern is legendary and an ornament for any table, as it reflects the turn-of-the-century taste for a balance of kitsch and art. Quality has been on the rise again in recent years, something which also holds true for this vintage combining ripe fullness with clear freshness and minerality, and joyful fruitiness with a floral style.

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**Champagne Taittinger  
Comtes Rosé 2005****17 points | 2015**

The Comtes has had a tough time of it among top rosés. However, in our view this is primarily the fault of the vintage. At this tasting the cuvée already seemed a little overripe and rather lacking in ultimate class and airiness – although certainly at a very high level. Full-bodied and fruity, vinous, fully ripe. Better enjoyed with a light meal than as an aperitif.

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**Champagne Laurent-Perrier  
Alexandra****16.5 points | to 2016**

The key characteristic of this rosé are the finesse and crystalline clarity we expect of any top cuvée, but also freshness and fruitiness and

an appealing, pleasant bouquet of red berries. As an aperitif or for an intimate get-together on a romantic summer's evening.

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**Champagne Pol Roger  
Extra Cuvée de Réserve****16.5 points | 2015**

Only very few brands have an unmistakable style (in terms of expression rather than quality) which asserts itself even in the basic cuvée (BSA). Pol Roger is one such brand, with this distinctive yet hard to describe touch of lemon bonbons and tempting bottle age, the perfect balance of freshness and ripeness, its slender and light style, delicate spice and fruitiness, precise construction, exquisite elegance and legendary likability.

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**Champagne Jacquart  
Cuvée Prestige Alpha 2006****16 points | 2015**

Jacquart is reaching for the sky, not least with the Cuvée Alpha. Excellence cannot simply be conjured out of thin air, even with an almost inexhaustible supply of top-quality base wines at your disposal. The first 2005 vintage turned out very corpulent and a little clumsy. The 2006 selected here remains true to its style of a full-bodied, ripe, forcefully fruity fizz with a pronounced complex of sweetness, but is already in a different league to the 2005, sophisticated, ending with spicy notes of ripe Golden Delicious apples. We are waiting impatiently for the offerings of future years which we have secretly been able to taste at embryo stage!

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**Champagne Laurent-Perrier  
Grand Siècle****16 points | 2015**

Once again, this wine's not entirely optimum clarity keeps it from achieving a higher score. Otherwise, it once again provides what we appreciate: balance between freshness and extract, with minerality predestining it to accompany fish (one of the few sparkling wines which truly works with smoked salmon).

A close-up photograph of a dark green bottle of Bollinger R.D. 1997 Champagne and a flute glass filled with champagne. The glass is in the foreground, partially obscuring the bottle. The bottle's main label is gold and black, featuring the text 'R.D. 1997 CHAMPAGNE BOLLINGER' and 'EXTRA BRUT'. A smaller label on the neck of the bottle reads 'BOLLINGER MAISON FONDEE EN 1829 AY FRANCE'. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a plate of food.

# Tough performers: champagne and mature cheese

*Champagnes belong on the table and can accompany any meal, whether light, exotic, summery, homely, classic or modern. Champagnes taste great with vegetables, fruit, fish, seafood, sausages, poultry, veal, pork or offal. Is cheese the only area where they fall down?*

**A** light Brut will of course have trouble with a powerful Maroilles or Munster. However, even such aromatic examples can find a suitable sparkling companion, either a good, slightly sweet demi-sec or a mild rosé with well-balanced fruit and no excessive minerality. Nevertheless, the best marriages are between the greatest champagnes and ripe hard cheese. For example, Bollinger's cellars are aging not only wine but also a few wheels of top-quality Comté; guests of the house can then enjoy a couple of morsels of a Jura cheese such as this, shaped by 24 or 36 months of development, with the mature top cuvées of the exclusive R.D. range.

One of my favourite souvenirs from my old homeland is therefore not milk chocolate but real, rare, properly mature, top-quality Emmental (not the cellophane-covered examples from the supermarket you could use as a rubber sling to shoot down blackbirds and thrushes). This cheese is worth a detour, and I was even happy to bribe customs officials when it was still necessary. Back at home in Bordeaux, I then generally fetch the most vinous of the mature champagnes from my cellar: a Celebris 1998, a Jacquesson 1995 single-site cuvée, my last Dom Ruinart 1993, a Krug 2000. All that is added to this pairing is a handful of nuts, a quarter of a juicy pear, and top-quality bread warm from the oven. True happiness knows no bounds.

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