



France, Champagne: Another Small Selection of Fine Champagnes

March 4, 2016

Just in case you ran out of Champagne at the end of last year, this is just a short list of recommendable Champagnes that I have tasted in the last few months on different occasions. Here, you will find some less well-known names such as Maurice Grumier, Remy Massin or Tristan H, as well as recently disgorged cuvées from world famous houses such as Pol Roger (including the 2004 Sir Winston Churchill), Jacquesson (including the new Extra-Brut Cuvée No. 739 and spectacular single vineyard cuvées from the 2005 vintage) and Moët & Chandon (including the Grand Vintages 2006 and the 1999 Collection). Champagne lovers with a heart for Pinot Meunier will certainly know Jérôme Prévost, whose extraordinary and delicate mono-cru, monovarietal and mono vintage cuvées from La Closerie, which I tasted with him in Berlin, just three days after the terrible terror attacks in Paris on November 13. The tasting of dozens of France's very best wine producers was planned to be held in the Ambassade de France in Berlin, but had to be cancelled short-term due to security concerns. Thanks to the solidarity of the owners and the heroic effort of Berlin wine importer Sébastien Visentin, this great event was finally held in the Pauly Saal in Berlin on November 16. Not only did all of the vintners show up, but hundreds of guests as well. It turned out to be an unforgettable tasting in a very special setting. It was that day when I fell in love with the fantastic Champagnes of Jacques Lassaigue, whose cuvées are highly appreciated by the world's finest restaurants, even though Lassaigue is not well represented in the media. Jacques, who farms four hectares of partly very old vines Chardonnay in Montgueux, does not send his Champagnes around for tastings. You either have to show up in Montgueux or in Berlin. Try to find his wines! If you ever see the 2010 Coteaux Champenoise Haut Revers du Chutat, you should definitely order it. This is a full-bodied and complex, pretty tropical-flavored Chardonnay table wine from 42-year-old vines that is not produced every year. This list will certainly be extended soon.

Stephan Reinhardt



**NV Jacquesson Extra Brut Cuvee
No 734 Degorgement Tardif**

The Extra Brut Cuvée No 734 Degorgement Tardif is based on the labor-intensive 2006 vintage (+27% Reserve wines), and blends 54% Chardonnay with 20% Pinot Noir and 26% Meunier. The "734 DT" was disgorged in October 2014 with a dosage of 3.5 grams per liter and is a great reflection of the Jacquesson vineyards, since it blends everything together to get the maximum of complexity without hiding the vintage character. Pure, deep and fresh on the lemon-flavored nose, this is a full-bodied, round and complex, highly elegant and stimulatingly dry Champagne that shows a lot of biscuit flavors. It's a very intense but well balanced and structured Champagne that should go very well with food.

Importer(s):

Vintage '59 Imports, 2800 Jenifer St, NW ,
Washington, DC 20015 , (202) 966-9218 ,
www.vintage59.com

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30
695 199 20, www.weine-visentin.de

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**2005 Jacquesson Extra Brut Ay
Vauzelle Terme**

From a tiny 30-acre plot that Jean-Hervé Chiquet calls their best terroir (although its very sensitive to botrytis and does not get its grapes to full ripeness very often), the very rare 2005 Extra Brut Ay Vauzelle Terme opens with a very clear and intense, but also delicate sweet cherry bouquet intermixed with chalky and iodine flavors. The wine was opened four hours before and offers a lovely, fresh and fruity taste and a chalky/dusty texture along with white and red fruit flavors, as well as some dashes of lemon juice. This is a fascinatingly firm and very mineral Champagne full of vibrancy, finesse and delicacy. A serious and expressive terroir wine indeed and one of my absolute favorite Champagnes of 2015.

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**2005 Jacquesson Extra Brut
Premier Cru Dizy Corne Baustray**

A really complex and fresh brioche and vanilla bouquet with refreshing lemon flavors opens the 2005 Dizy Corne Baustray Extra Brut. This wine is sourced from a steep, one-hectare, southwest-facing Premier Cru Chardonnay vineyard that was planted with 9,000 vines per hectare in 1960 on Campanian chalk, with a two-to three-meter thick, gravelly structured clay and silt layer. This is a rich, explosively fresh and very complex, highly mineral Premier Cru with a long and fascinatingly salty and grippy finish. With 11.3% alcohol and 7.2 grams per liter of total acidity, this is a very expressive Champagne and has great character. The 2005 was the first Corne Baustray that was disgorged with a minimum of dosage (1.5 grams per liter). The wine was produced in 1995 for the first time, then again in 2000, 2002 and 2005, and we should be happy waiting for 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014 and "most likely" also in 2015.

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**2005 Jacquesson Brut Grand Cru
Avize Champ Cain**

Very discreet but mineral and complex on the fresh and chalky nose opens the 2005 Brut Grand Cru Avize Champ Cain. This is a very elegant, highly complex and very salty Grand Cru made from a south-facing 1.35 hectare single vineyard Chardonnay, which was planted in 1962 on pure limestone with almost no top soil. The millésime 2005 is a highly complex and refreshing, firmly structured and tension-filled wine of great finesse and elegance. It's all this: pure terroir, pure chalk and pure Jacquesson, but most of all -- extremely stimulating. However, don't waste its talents because I suppose the future of this outstanding Champagne is far ahead from now.

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**NV Jacquesson Cuvée 739
Extra-Brut**

Jacquesson's soon to be released Cuvée 739 Extra-Brut is based on the 2011 vintage and 31% Reserve wines, all from Grand and Premier Cru sites in the Côte des Blancs and Vallée de la Marne. The 739 is an assemblage of 57% Chardonnay, 21% Pinot Noir and 22% Meunier, all fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged in foudres. The unfiltered wine was disgorged in July 2014 with a dosage of 3.5 grams per liter. Medium-intense in its golden color, the Cuvée 739 shows a clear, deep, rich and complex nose of ripe white fruits, bread, honey wax, and spicy aromas intermixed with refreshing chalk and lemon flavors in the background. Full-bodied, lovely, pure and fresh on the palate, with nutty flavors and a stunningly smooth fruit, this is a full-flavored, wide open yet very delicate Champagne with a very fine and well structured mineral finish. This is not a big wine perhaps (although it starts a little bit as such), but a Champagne full of elegance and finesse. It's a great aperitif and food partner for lighter dishes. And a lovely midnight drink anyway.

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