

# The International Wine Review

November/December 2012

## Report # 34: Champagne Revisited

### Introduction



Every serious wine enthusiast loves Champagne, and we're no different. To prepare for this report, an updated and expanded version of **Report # 9 Champagne**, we traveled to Champagne in September to observe the harvest, taste base wines and finished Champagnes, and meet with the *chefs de caves* of large Champagne houses (Grand Marques), small

grower-producers, and cooperatives. We tasted a wide variety of styles of Champagne and paired them with the sumptuous dishes of local restaurants. We visited the old limestone quarries now used to age Champagne, walked the vineyards where workers were harvesting grapes, and, of course, visited Dom Perignon's abbey overlooking the vineyards at Hautvillers. We visited and tasted the Champagnes of each region as well as the magnificent prestige cuvées blended from across the regions and Grand Cru and Premier Cru villages. In this report, we relate what we learned from this visit and from our many tastings.

The sparkling wines of Champagne are unique in their finesse and refinement while expressing the unique terroir of the region. Chalk subsoils hundreds of feet deep and the cool, wet, marginal climate for growing grapes are the most important elements of that terroir, not replicated anywhere else on earth. Growers face the challenge of coaxing phenolically ripe fruit from these challenging growing conditions, and producers blend base wines from different vineyard plots to make Champagnes of exceptional balance and flavor. The changing climate poses yet another challenge to growers and producers who are increasingly adopting sustainable viticulture practices that limit the use of chemical pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers while reducing the region's carbon footprint.

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This report looks at the different regions of Champagne, the grapes and the Echelle des Crus system for classifying vineyards. We examine growing conditions and the effects of climate change. In the winery, we take an in-depth look at the *méthode champenoise* and explore recent trends in making Champagne. We explore the diverse styles of Champagne and how best to pair Champagne with food, including an expanded table of recommended food and Champagne pairings, organized by style of Champagne. Finally, we look at the dynamic market for Champagne, including rapidly increasing consumption by the expanding

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# Introduction

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middle income countries. Growing consumption in light of constrained supplies should be of interest and concern to all lovers of Champagne who don't have unlimited Swiss bank accounts.

Holiday time is fast approaching, and what better time for Champagne? To help with decisions about which Champagne to purchase, this report includes several tables on the top producers of each major Champagne style and tasting notes and ratings of more than 250 Champagnes. Needless to say, there are many magnificent Champagnes to enjoy throughout the Holidays and beyond. Happy Holidays!

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Mike Potashnik

Don Winkler

## Background

Champagne is a geographic area in northern France, but it is also a prescribed method of winemaking that evolved over several centuries. Champagne is one of France's great wines; but, unlike wines of the Rhone, Bordeaux, and Burgundy, it is as much about the process as it is about the place. It is more than the terroir of the Champagne region.

The reputation and recognition of Champagne worldwide is due to the strength of its brand. There is no stronger brand name in wine than Champagne. The Champenoise have done a superb job developing, improving, and defending this name. This is the only region in France where the *appellation contrôlée* statement is not required on the label, only the name Champagne.

Despite vineyard expansion in recent years, and signs that the *Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne* (CIVC) may eventually allow further expansion, there are limits to how much the demarcated area of Champagne can expand due to a shortage of suitable land for vineyards and EU restrictions on production. Global demand is strong and growing, especially in middle-income countries—the BRICs, while supply is limited. As a result, the best Champagnes from the best growers and the best houses are destined to become increasingly more expensive.

## The Invention of Champagne



The common myth is that Dom Perignon invented Champagne and the Champagne process in Hautvillers (pictured here); but this is not the case. In Tom Stevenson's *World Encyclopedia of Champagne*

& Sparkling Wine, he reveals that it was probably the "English, and not the French that invented Champagne". Even the French have pretty much resigned themselves to this fact.

Up until the 18th century, Champagne was actually a still wine that was shipped to England in cask and then bottled. With the onset of winter temperatures, fermentation of Champagne was routinely halted prior to complete dryness, and the wine was shipped in cask to England where it was bottled. As temperatures began to rise in the spring, it would often begin to re-ferment, or go through malolactic fermentation, in the bottle, resulting in a spritzzy wine. The problem was that the glass being produced during this period, both in England and France, was too weak to withstand the pressure exerted by the release of carbon dioxide. More than 2 or 3 bars of pressure would easily break the bottles being produced. As a result, much of what was shipped and bottled outside of the Champagne region frequently resulted in an explosion.

The turning point in the history of Champagne actually occurred in England. It was a twist of fate that led to the development of stronger glass bottles. In an effort to protect the forests in England, King James I issued a royal decree prohibiting wood fueled furnaces. This quickly led to the transition to charcoal, which achieves higher, hotter temperatures. The result: glass produced in England became much stronger and capable of holding the mounting pressure resulting from a secondary fermentation in bottle. Glass being produced in France, which relied on fires fueled with wood, was weaker and could not contain the pressure exerted by sparkling wines.

Thus, sparkling Champagne probably arrived in England before it did in France. The process of Champagne production was first documented by Christopher Merret in England in 1662. He referred to the addition of sugar and molasses to "all sorts of wines to make them drink brisk and sparkling". This occurred nearly 20 years before Dom Perignon arrived at the abbey in Hautvillers, and before the mention of the process in any French literature.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Champagne was a desert wine, only served at the end of the meal. All Champagne was generously sweetened by adding sugar (i.e., the dosage) at the end of the fermentation cycle. Historical documents show some 18th century Champagnes were sold with up to 300 grams per liter (g/l) of residual sugar, about twice as sweet as Port. Tastes varied by country, and the sweetest Champagne was sold to the Russians. The Champagne that Americans drank in the 18th century was only moderately sweet by these standards, and the Champagne consumed by the British was among the driest. British buyers continued to push for drier and drier Champagnes, and by the 20th century, a new style of Champagne known as "brut" was created.

## The Vineyard Classification System: The *Echelle des Crus*

Every village within Champagne, all 317 of them, have been classified by a rating system known as the *Echelle des Crus*. Each village is assigned a rating based on its soil profile and the quality of the grapes produced. The highest rating, or maximum *Echelle*, is 100% and deemed a Grand Cru, of which there are seventeen. Villages rated from 90% to 99% are called Premier Cru, of which there are forty-three. All other villages are rated between 80% and 89%; they account for 75% of the villages in Champagne (See the full *Echelle* listing at the CIVC website [www.champagne.fr](http://www.champagne.fr)).

The *Echelle des Crus* (EDC) system was for many years the basis on which the growers were paid for their grapes. After the base price for the grapes of a particular vintage was established, each grower would receive payment based on its *Echelle* rating. For example, if the base price for grapes were \$1000 per kilo, then Grand Cru growers would receive \$1000, a Premier rated vineyard of 95% would receive \$950, and a low rated vineyard of 80%, would only receive only \$800 per kilo of grapes. This system is no longer used, prohibited as price fixing by the European Union, but *Echelle* ratings are still an important factor in determining price.

When the Echelle system was created, the entire village was given a percentage score, but there is considerable quality variation between vineyards within each village. The CIVC has been working on a new zoning project to identify and reclassify the entire region based on 538 square foot parcels. This is still a work in progress.

### Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC)

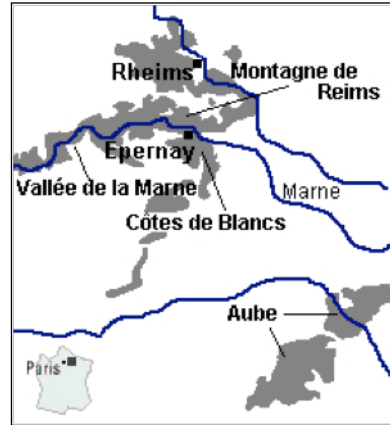


With headquarters in Epernay, the CIVC is a highly successful trade organization that serves as the regulatory body for the producers and growers in

Champagne. It organizes and controls the production, distribution and promotion of the wines of Champagne and conducts research for the region. It does clonal research as well as experiment with cover crops, training systems, etc. Until the early 1990s it set the prices of grapes, and it still regulates the size of the harvest and limits production to maintain market prices. It also protects the designation of origin and the trademark of Champagne and through offices in other countries, like the Champagne Bureau in the U.S, educates consumers about Champagne. The CIVC is funded by a tax on grapes harvested and bottles shipped. Established in 1941 to help producers negotiate with the occupying Germans, the CIVC also served as a model for other regulatory wine organizations in Europe, like the Italian *consorzios* and the Spanish *consejos reguladores*.

Typically, a non-vintage Champagne is produced with fruit from vineyards rated 80-90%. Non-vintage Champagnes are also more likely to have a relatively high percentage of Pinot Meunier, as this grape is more expressive at a young age. Vintage Champagne is usually sourced from vineyards rated at least 90-100% EDC, as higher rated vineyards are more likely to achieve ideal ripeness. Some Pinot Meunier may be included in a vintage Champagne, but it is more likely to consist of mostly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. A prestige cuvée is often produced from 100% rated EDC, Grand Cru villages and from particularly good vineyard sites, within those villages, although there are exceptions, including Dom Pérignon and Krug.

## The Regions of Champagne



The Champagne appellation consists of over 35,000 hectares (86,500 acres) of vineyards. Within the appellation there are five regions producing distinctly different base wines. They include three northern regions that include all the Grands and Premiers Crus—Montagne de Reims, Côte des Blancs, and Vallée de la

Marne—and two southern regions—Côte de Sézanne and Côte des Bars (Aube). (For a detailed map of Champagne see Annex III.) The locations and plantings in each region and the classification of their vineyards are as follows:

**Montagne de Reims** is located to the north and is comprised of 67% of total plantings, which consist of 56% Pinot Noir, 28% Chardonnay, and 16% Pinot Meunier. There are 5 Grand Cru villages (rated 100% Echelle Des Crus): Mailly-Champagne, Verzenay, Verzy, Louvois, Ambonnay, and Bouzy. There are 7 Premier Cru villages: Rilly-la-Montagne (94% EDC), Chigny-les-Roses (94% EDC), Ludes (94% EDC), Villiers Marmery (95% EDC), Trepail (95% EDC), Tauxieres (99% EDC), and Avenay (93% EDC).

**Côte des Blancs** is in the southern part of Champagne and is made up of 96% Chardonnay, 3% Pinot Noir, and 1% Meunier. The Chardonnay grown in this region is considered by many to be the best fruit for long-lived Champagne. There are 4 Grands Crus: Chouilly (Chardonnay only), Cramant, Avize, and les Mesnil-sur-Oger. The four Premiers Crus are Cuis (95% EDC-Chardonnay only), Grauves (95% EDC- Chardonnay only), Vertus., Voipreux (95% EDC), and (95% EDC) Bergeres-les-Vertus..

**Vallée de la Marne** consists of 10% Chardonnay, 27% Pinot Noir, and 63% Pinot Meunier. The only Grand Cru (rated 100% EDC) is Ay-Champagne. The four Premiers Crus are: Mareuil-sur-Aÿ (99% EDC), Dizy (94% EDC) , Hautvilliers (93% EDC, and Cumieres (93% EDC).

**Côte de Sézanne** is planted with 70% Chardonnay, 21% Pinot Noir, and 9% Pinot Meunier. Côte des Bars (Aube) makes up 23% of total plantings with 8% Chardonnay, 85% Pinot Noir, and 7% Pinot Meunier.

### Permitted Grapes

Champagne is usually produced from the trio of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier, but other grapes are also authorized: Pinot Blanc Vrai, Arbanne, and Petite Meslier. Moutard makes a Champagne called Cuvée des 6 Cepages from old vine Arbanne called Vieilles Vignes, and a Vintage Brut Champagne made using all six grapes.

Plantings of these lesser grapes are now forbidden, although production is allowed from the vines still in the ground. A small amount of Gamay is planted, but it is used for still wines and not for Champagne.

Pinot Meunier tends to be planted where spring frosts are a problem as it buds late and ripens early. It prefers heavier clay soils. It is floral aromatically and lends a fruity character to young blends. Despite occupying 33 percent of the vineyard land in Champagne, it gets very little respect from the Champenoise. It is the only variety of the big three that is not eligible for Grand Cru status. Eleven different Meunier clones are used in Champagne.

Some argue that Pinot Noir is the most important grape in Champagne. After a few years in bottle, Pinot Noir adds great character, mid-palate structure, mouth feel, and complexity. Pinot Noir adds the richness, length, and finish that Pinot Meunier seems to lack. Pinot Noir accounts for 39 percent of Champagne's plantings, and eighteen clones of Pinot Noir are used in region. Chardonnay will also develop complexity, but requires more aging. Chardonnay can be tart and lean when young, lending flavors of citrus and apple. With bottle age, Chardonnay can be the most important component to any Champagne. Eleven Chardonnay clones can be found in Champagne, which accounts for 28 percent of plantings.

## In the Vineyard

### Climate and Soils.



The Champagne terroir is unique in both its climate and soil. Located at the northerly latitude of 49° North, grape vines are at the northernmost limits of their cold tolerance. Not only are temperatures cool, but sunshine is sparse, and

rainfall is frequent—up to 200 days of rain per year and throughout the growing season. These conditions produce the grapes and wines perfect for the production of Champagne, but they also present problems of mildew, millerandage (shot berries, pictured here), coulure, and damage from frost and hail, resulting in large variations in yields from one vintage to the next. *Millerandage* is an irregular fruit set caused by cool growing conditions and results in smaller crops. *Coulure*, on the other hand, occurs after flowering and results in the smaller berries dropping off. It is caused by an imbalance in the carbohydrates in the vine and an inability to produce adequate sugars for the plant tissue.

Extreme weather and varying crop conditions result in high variability in quality as well. Summertime heat spikes, like that of 2003, can lead to fruit that is not phenologically ripe with high sugars and low acidity. Good producers that pick at the right time and carefully select their fruit can make good wines in these years, but they rarely produce

vintage Champagnes, and the non-vintage bruts they make need to be consumed young. At the other extreme is the wet summer followed by a wet harvest, like in 2011. Low sugar levels in such a vintage are like to require chaptalisation, and the Champagnes can be unbalanced; again, producers are unlikely to produce vintage Champagnes. Much more common in Champagne is the cool spring, followed by a grey, somewhat damp summer and warm, dry weather prior to and during harvest, such as occurred in 2008. These conditions often produce wines of good acidity and alcohol, and good producers make excellent vintage Champagnes in these years. The better vintages of the past decade include 2008, 2007, 2004 and 2002.

**Climate Change.** The climate is warming in Champagne as it is elsewhere in the wine world. While in the 1970s the average temperature during the growing season was 14.3°C, over the last decade it was 16.6°C. As a result, flowering dates are earlier, harvest dates are earlier, and growing seasons are slightly shorter. In addition to warmer temperatures, the weather has become more extreme and unpredictable, increasing the risk of summer frosts and harvest rains. While these conditions affect the grapes—raising sugar and alcohol levels and reducing acidity—many producers claim fruit quality has improved, and they respond to higher sugar in the grape by reducing chaptalisation and decreasing the dosage to retain good balance. Earlier harvests appear to have adversely affected Pinot Meunier, at least according to some producers. On the other hand, Pinot Noir has benefited from warming temperatures. Riper fruit and higher sugar are also leading to increased offerings by producers of zero dosage or brut nature Champagnes.

**Frost.** One of the biggest challenges in Champagne is frost. Spring frosts occur at flowering, and, while this does not affect quality, it does reduce yields. However, a fall or autumn frost is even more serious. While fruit is still hanging on the vines, an autumn frost kills the foliage, essentially stopping all photosynthesis and ripening. In addition, it can damage the skins of the grapes making them susceptible to rot. Frost can be followed by rain, resulting in mildew and powdery mildew.

To reduce frost, producers use *chaufferettes*, or frost pot heaters, to protect their vines. Aspersions is a more modern technique where water is sprayed over the vines; the water freezes, creating a protective coating and enabling the vines to withstand temperatures as low as -5°C. More expensive techniques include the use of helicopters to blow warmer air into the vineyard. In 2012, frosts in mid-April destroyed nearly 10 percent of the appellation's crop, with losses as high as 40 percent in some areas.



**Soils.** The chalk soils of Champagne are one of its most unique features. Formed by belemnite fossils from the Mesozoic era 90 million years ago, the limestone subsoil is up to 200 meters thick. Fissures in the belemnite chalk per-

mit good drainage, while its porous nature helps it serve as a water reservoir that can be tapped by the roots of the vines. Deep chalk subsoils are found in the Côte des Blancs, the Montagne de Reims, and the Côte de Sezanne. The Marne Valley and Côte des Bar, on the other hand, have soils that are a mix of marl, clay and sand. The chalk itself does not impart the steely, austere character often found in Champagne; this is more a function of ripeness. It does, however, play a role in the high acidity of the wines. Along with the cool climate, the high lime content of the soil contributes to the high acidity and low pH found in Champagne.

## Viticulture

**Trellising.** One of the most prominent features about the vineyards in Champagne is the distinctive forms of trellising. Four training methods are allowed by the AOC: Chablis, Cordon, Guyot, and Vallée de la Marne. Their use is regulated by grape variety, Echelle rating, and vineyard location. The Chablis system, which provides some additional fruiting buds as insurance to the grower in the event of a spring frost, is used extensively for Chardonnay, the Cordon method for Pinot Noir, and Vallée de la Marne training only for Pinot Meunier. Guyot can be used for all varieties, but only in lesser cru village locations.

**Viticulture Raisonnée.** Through its research and technical support and advice, the CIVC has taken the lead in Champagne in promoting sustainable practices in the vineyard, including publishing an annual practical guide for growers.<sup>1</sup> These practices include using organic fertilizers, integrated pest management (IPM) to reduce the use of chemical pesticides, and use of grasscover and mulch to reduce herbicides, runoff and erosion. IPM includes monitoring potential problems and intervening only when necessary, thereby reducing the frequency, intensity, and costs of spraying to protect against pests and diseases. When possible, natural enemies—predators or diseases—are introduced to control pests naturally.

In addition to reducing the use of chemical products, the Champagne region is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and recycling natural resources both in the vineyard and the winery. A 2003 CIVC study led to the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020 and 75% by 2050. As a result, 92 percent of winery effluent is recycled today. The study found that packaging accounts for 1/3 of Champagne's carbon footprint. As a result, an effort is being made to reduce bottle weight, which alone will reduce the footprint by 1.4 percent.

**Yields.** The harvest parameters for Champagne grapes are completely different from grapes destined for still wine. The quality of Champagne is much less dependent on yields than it is for other styles of wine. The quality of table wines is susceptible to overcropping. However, full flavor development and strong varietal character in grapes are not important to producing quality Champagne. In fact,

they are to be avoided. Although, Champagne has some of the highest yields of any AOC region in France, it does not seem to diminish the quality of the wine—yet another argument for the importance of the method over that of the terroir.

Many growers agree that low yields are not necessarily desirable in Champagne. Grower-producer, Didier Gimmonet, believes that “low yields in Champagne make for wines of opacity, like over-reduced sauces; black holes of intensity through which no flavor can emerge.” On the other hand, he says that high yields (greater than 11 thousand kg/ha for Chardonnay, for example) can lead to an imbalance between acidity and alcohol.

Each vintage the CIVC sets the maximum permitted yields, both for growers who sell grapes and for growers who bottle their own Champagne. However, maximum yield means something different in Champagne than it does in most other appellations. In other appellations, maximum yields are set to ensure quality; in Champagne maximum yields are market driven. Maximum yield is the maximum amount of grapes that can be sold; actual harvested fruit can significantly exceed the mandated maximum yield. Both the market for Champagne and vintage conditions influence the CIVC decisions on yields. Explaining permitted yields is complicated. For example, in 2009, at a time when the demand for Champagne was decreasing due to the worldwide recession, the CIVC set a *rendement butoir* (maximum yield) of 14 thousand kg/ha, comprised of two parts—a base yield of 9700 kg/ha and a reserve yield of 4300 kg/ha. The base yield is the amount of grapes sold by growers to producers. Growers who bottle their own wines can harvest 14 thousand kg/ha, but the excess above 9700 kg/ha must be kept in their reserves individuelles (reserve wines) for future use, unless that exceeds another regulation on the allowable quantity of reserve wine. Taking all this into account, the maximum permitted yield was 12,800 kg/ha. However, growers are required to pick all grapes and to send all those in excess of permitted yields to the distillery<sup>2</sup>.

**Harvesting.** Harvesting is always done manually, as machine harvesting is illegal and impractical for quality Champagne. Delicate handling of the fruit is important in order to avoid the extraction of phenolics and tannins in the skins, stems, and seeds of the grape.

AOC regulations constrain the potential alcohol of harvested grapes. However, producers have the luxury of knowing they can add up to 2 percent alcohol through chaptalisation—adding sugar prior to fermentation to achieve the desired levels of alcohol. Chaptalization continues to serve as an important part of the winemaking arsenal in Champagne. In cooler, wetter years when desired ripeness is just out of reach, chaptalisation is essential. The problem is that some employ this practice every year, the exception being a super-ripe vintage like 2003.

<sup>2</sup>Actual vineyard yields can far exceed the “permitted yield”. Tom Stevenson reports that for the year 2004, the maximum permitted yield was 12 thousand kg/ha, but average actual yield was a huge 23 thousand kg/ha.

<sup>1</sup>CIVC (2012) *Guide Pratique: Viticulture Durable en Champagne*.

Because chaptalisation can add 2 percent alcohol and secondary fermentation adds another 1.5 percent, the fruit needs to be picked between 8.5 and 11 percent. An alcohol level of 10.5 to 11 percent is the upper limit for the base wines, as final alcohols of over 12.5 percent are undesirable in Champagne. This is one of the big challenges in producing Champagne—pick too early and the wine lacks flavor and potential alcohol; pick too late and the wine will be over ripe and alcoholic. As Gimonnet says, the objective is to attain optimal maturity, not maximum maturity of the grape. For him, fruit is optimally ripe when there is sufficient sugar in the grape to yield 10.5 percent alcohol and acidity is between 7 and 8.

**Multiple Vineyards.** Champagne has historically been a blended wine, sourced from multiple vineyards across the appellation. Blending developed for several reasons. It enables the winemaker to make better and more harmonious wines by blending grapes with different characteristics from villages and vineyards across the region. It helps to deal with the vagaries of localized weather in Champagne; by sourcing grapes from different sites a producer can compensate for losses in a particular vineyard area. And third, the large houses which produce huge volumes of Champagne need to source their grapes from a large number of vineyards to obtain the necessary volume.

## In the Winery: *Méthode Champenoise*

### Pressing and *Débourbage*



**The Press.** The first important step in the production of Champagne is pressing the grapes prior to fermentation. Grapes are pressed as whole clusters or bunches and never destemmed. Although Dom Perignon did not discover Champagne, it is widely believed that he developed the traditional

Champagne press, known as a Coquard press. In addition to the Coquard press, there are two forms of horizontal press in use: a pneumatic press with an inflatable bladder and a hydraulic press that uses large metal plates. Gentle pressing is essential to avoid the extraction of phenolics from the skins, seeds, and stems.

The traditional Coquard press (pictured here) holds one marc (8,800 lbs) of grapes. From the marc, only 2,550 liters of juice can be extracted. The first 2,050 liters is the *cuvée*, while the next 500 liters is called the *première taille*, only the *cuvée* and the *première taille* are now permitted in Champagne. A third press, or the *deuxième taille*, some 116 liters, is no longer included in Champagne.

**Cold Settling (*Débourbage*)** The juice is allowed to settle for 12 to 48 hours. This allows grape solids, skins, and debris to settle at the bottom of the tank, leaving cleaner juice for fermentation. A second *débourbage*, rather than fining, is preferred by the best producers. Leaving some solids in the juice adds in the development of a fine sparkling mousse.

### Production of Base Wine and the First Fermentation

After cold settling, the next step is the creation of a still base wine. Most modern winemakers in Champagne ferment their base wines in large temperature controlled stainless-steel tanks; traditionally a warm and rapid fermentation (65-68° F) is preferred. Warmer fermentations help release aromatic character. Some producers, however, still prefer using oak barrels. These include Krug, Bollinger, Taittinger, Roederer, Gratién, Selosse and Jacquesson. Regardless, the objective is to create a neutral base, with little varietal character, or aroma, moderately low alcohol, and no trace of oak aroma or flavor.

Most producers will then put the wine through malolactic conversion (ML is a bacterial transformation and not a fermentation.) Some notable exceptions include producers like Bollinger and Krug, who block malolactic conversion. The key is balance; overdoing malolactic results in heavy diacetyl, or a buttery character that is almost always avoided with Champagne.

The winemaker must then choose cultured Champagne yeasts for the fermentation of the base wines. There is not much to be gained by relying on ambient yeast when producing the base wine. Again, the key factor is for reliable yeasts that create a neutral base wine that is dry, moderate in alcohol and high in acidity.

Champagne producers, particularly the large houses, will ferment as many base wines as possible, keeping lots separate based on grape variety, village, and crus. Moët Chandon, for example, has about 800 different vats classified by variety and vineyard plot. Vintage Champagne is produced with 100% of the fruit of that vintage, but non-vintage usually involves at least two or more vintages, and often a reserve wine of vintage quality. However, it is not uncommon to find non-vintage Champagnes made predominantly, or entirely, of a single year's base wine. L. Aubry's Non-Vintage Rosé Brut, for example, is made entirely of 2009 grapes, as is Jean Lallement's Non-Vintage Rosé Brut, while Pehu-Simonet's Non-Vintage Blanc de Blancs Brut comes from all 2008 Chardonnay fruit.

Rosé Champagnes can be made by either allowing the wine to stay in contact with the red grape skins for a while (the *saignée* method) or by adding in a little red still wine to color the *cuvée*. The terms blanc de blancs refers to wines made solely from white grapes (Chardonnay), while blanc de noirs indicates wine made from only black grapes (Pinot Noir and Meunier).

**Blending (*Assemblage*)** After several months, all the base wines are brought together to make a special *cuvée*, or blend. This can involve 30 to 70 base wines. This is one of the most important aspects of the Champagne method and



is pivotal to the consistency and complexity of many house styles. While lab analysis is important in determining alcohol, acidity, pH, and residual sugar, the *assemblage* is determined by a winemaker's decisions based on taste. After tasting all base wines, the winemaker determines how the base wines will be used. A blender putting the *assemblage* together must take into account that the wine has yet to undergo a second fermentation.

In the production of a non-vintage brut, for example, the *assemblage* involves intricate decisions on the blending of different grape varieties, Echelle des Crus-rated villages, previous vintages, and the inclusion of reserve wines held back from older vintages.

## The Second Fermentation and the *Liqueur de Tirage*

After *assemblage*, the wine is racked, gently fined, and transferred to a clean tank. It is at this point that the *liqueur de tirage* is added. This consists of still wine, sugar, yeast nutrients, cultured yeast, and clarifying agents such as gelatins, alginates, or bentonite. The degree of pressure, or mousse, will be determined by the amount of sugar added.

Most Champagne attains full mousse, or grand mousseux, which is 5 to 6 atmospheres of pressure. For mousseux, the wine need have only 3.5 to 6 atmospheres of pressure. A *crémant* previously referred to wines at 3.6 atmospheres of pressure. The term was phased out in Champagne in 1994, and was traded to sparkling wine producers elsewhere in France in exchange for their agreeing to no longer use the term *Méthode Champenoise* (*Crémant d'Alsace* is an example).

After the *liqueur de tirage*, the wine is usually bottled with a crown cap that secures a small plastic pot to catch sediment and dead yeast. [Several producers (e.g., Moët Chandon, Bérèche), use cork rather than a crown cap for their special *cuvées*.] The sediment will be removed at a later stage. The wine begins a slow, cool secondary fermentation. The fermentation occurs at 53° F, or lower. This requires the use of special yeasts that can perform well in cold conditions. Other desirable traits in the yeast include resistance to pressure, formation of bubbles, tolerance to high acidity, avoidance of foam during fermentation, and high flocculation—the separation of solid particles from a liquid in flake form. (This allows the wine to be riddled more easily).

This slow, cold ferment can take anywhere from two weeks to three months. Many believe the slower the fermentation, the more complex the wine, so the lower the temperature in the cellar the better (Pol Roger has one of the coldest cellars in Champagne). More complex flavors are produced when the second fermentation and autolysis occur slowly.

When fermentation is completed, the Champagne is transferred to *pupitres*, or gyropalettes for storage. Later it will undergo *remuage*, or riddling. Some Champagne is sold at this point, or stored horizontally. This wine is called *vins sur lattes*. *Poignelage* is nothing more than shaking the sediment from the side of wine stored *sur lattes*, this can be done by machine or by hand.

**Lees Aging and Yeast Autolysis** The aging of wine *sur lattes*, while on its lees, may be the most important and critical step in the Champagne method. It is during the wine's time *sur lattes* and *sur point* (bottle neck down at an angle) that profound changes begin to occur in Champagne. Lees aging and autolysis is where much of the character and flavor of Champagne is derived.

Autolysis is the enzymatic breakdown of the dead yeast cells trapped in the bottle. Yeast autolysis literally means 'self digestion'. Autolysis begins to impart flavor and aroma after a matter of 4-12 months, but can last five years or more. By law, non-vintage Champagne requires 15 months on the lees, vintage Champagne at least 36 months. A prestige *cuvée* may rest on triage for 5-10 years. Many producers age their wines much longer than is required by AOC law.

This enzymatic breakdown of the dead yeast cells results in aromas and flavors of nuts, biscuits, bread dough, toast, acacia, brandy, and brioche. It provides for richer mouth feel and complexity. Yeast autolysis is important to the flavor of white Burgundy and California Chardonnay; it plays a dominant role in the flavor of Champagne.

Champagne left *sur point*, after autolysis is complete, can stay fresh for years, even decades. Older Champagnes, once disgorged, will age quickly. This is why some producers, such as Bollinger, prefer to disgorge their wines upon order and shipment. When to consume a disgorged Champagne is a matter of taste: the older the disgorgement the toastier the flavor.

**Riddling or *Remuage*** The objective of *remuage* is to draw all the sediment to the neck of the bottle where it can be extracted later. The wine is aged *sur point*. Removal of the dead yeast and sediment can be done in one of three ways: 1) by hand, called riddling, 2) by machine, or gyropalette, or 3) by a modern technique using small yeast capsules, or pellets called *billes*, a method that avoids *remuage* altogether.



Riddling by hand, done by a *remueur*, involves frequently turning bottles in a *pupitre* over six to eight weeks. This method was perfected by Madame Veuve Clicquot during the 19th century. An experienced *remueur* can riddle 30,000 bottles a day. A *pupitre* is a rack that holds 60 bottles on each side, at an angle of 45 degrees. Manual riddling is labor intensive and expensive, and most producers do this method only for their prestige cuvées.

Gyropalates are machines that were developed by Cava producers in Spain during the 1970's. This is a less expensive and more efficient method than doing it by hand. With specially designed yeasts and riddling agents, a single gyropalate can riddle 500 or more bottles in seven to eight days.

## The Final Stages

**Disgorging (Dégorgement)** Once *remuage* is complete, and the sediment is collected in the plastic pot at the bottom of the bottle, the winemaker removes it. *Dégorgement* is done by immersing the bottle neck into a brine solution, freezing the contents in the neck. The crown cap (or cork) is then removed, and a frozen piece of ice, containing the sediment, is ejected. This process, and all subsequent steps through the final corking, is done by highly sophisticated machines.

**Liqueur d'Expedition and Dosage** During disgorgement a tiny amount of wine is removed, which needs to be replaced quickly. A mixture of wine and a small amount of cane or beet sugar are injected back into the bottle, and the wine is corked. This mixture is called the *liqueur d'expédition*, and the amount of sugar added is called the dosage. Recently, some producers have begun to use *moût concentré rectifié* (MCR), a concentrated grape must instead of sugar. While MCR is a sweetener made from grapes, it's made from Languedoc grapes, and there's no consensus about its effect on the wine.



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The dosage ultimately determines the style of the Champagne. The range of styles created by dosage, going from driest to sweetest, includes: Brut Nature, Extra Dry, Brut, Extra Sec, Sec, Demi Sec, and Doux. The main purpose of the dosage is to offset the acidity in the wine (see Annex 3 for a complete breakdown of the different grades.) The younger the wine, the greater the dosage of sugar required to balance the wine's youthful acidity. What is confusing to many is the fact that these different grades overlap. One producer's brut may be another producer's extra dry.

There is no correct amount of dosage for Champagne. While low or zero dosage Champagnes are in fashion, they are not intrinsically better than those with a higher dosage. How much dosage to add to a Champagne is

purely a matter of judgment on the part of the winemaker whose goal is to produce a wine of elegance, flavor and balance.

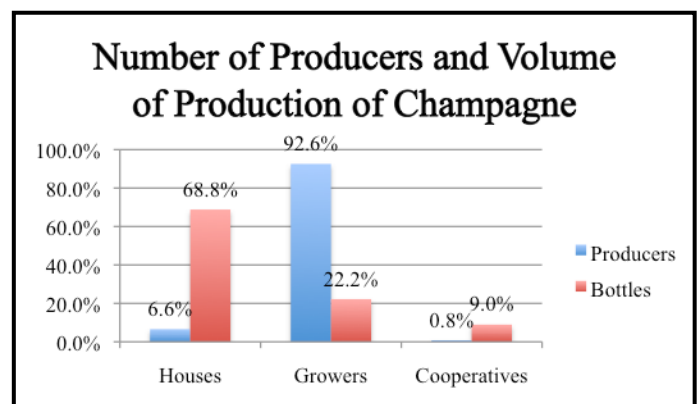
**Corking** The corking of Champagne involves placing a metal cap on top of the cork and inserting the cork for half its length in to the neck of the bottle. The cork is then pounded so that the top half is too fat to slide any further into the neck. This creates the mushroom shape of the cork. A wire muzzle, or cage, secures it to the bottle. The bottle is then shaken to homogenize the wine and liqueur.



**Aging** Once bottled, Champagne continues to age and develop for years, even decades. The better the Champagne, the more desirable these changes will be. The bubbles become creamier and less aggressive, and the *liqueur d'expédition* and dosage become integrated with the wine, creating floral, honey and toast notes with nuances of cocoa, roasted coffee, and coconut. The Maillard Reaction is the marrying of the dosage and sugar with the amino acids in the wine. This reaction takes at least three months and can last up to two years.

## Producer Houses, Growers, and Cooperatives

As shown in the graph, there are many more growers (92.6% of the total) making Champagne than there are houses and cooperatives. But growers are small, while many of the houses are very large. As a result, most Champagne (68.8%) is produced by houses, while growers account for only 22% and cooperatives just 9%. The 136 cooperatives are very important in the production of Champagne but usually sell their production as base wine (*vins clairs*) to the larger houses. Only 45 cooperatives make Champagne (called *Récoltant Coopérateur*, or RC), some of the more prominent being Mailly Grand Cru, Nicolas Feuillatte (actually, a union of more than 80 separate cooperatives), Pannier, and De Castelnau.



**Houses** There are 261 Champagne houses, or *Négociant-Manipulants* (NM). While they own just 12 percent of the vineyards, they account for 69 percent of the all Champagne sold, and nearly 97 percent of the wine exported outside of Europe. Just 25 houses, or *grandes marques* (See Box) are responsible for over 60 percent of the *Négociant-Manipulants* business.

The primary goals of producer houses are to achieve consistency and maintain the house style. These objectives are largely achieved by sourcing fruit and base wines from their own estates and other sources, and through the skill of their winemaker in creating the *assemblage*. It is largely the diversity of the base wines, and the art of blending, from producers such as Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, and Pommery, that distinguish larger house Champagnes from grower Champagne. Terroir is important to the large houses but more for creating blending components and ensuring consistency of the house style.

**What is a Grande Marque?** This is the French term for "great brand". The term has no legal meaning, but it is a historical reference for a group of producers based on prestige, quality, and membership in an elite club. In 1997 the Syndicat de Grandes Marques de Champagne was officially dissolved. The membership at that time included 25 producers that accounted for the majority of Champagne being sold in France and abroad. The list included: Ayala, Billecart-Salmon, Bollinger, Canard-Duchêne, Deutz, Gosset, Charles Heidsieck, Heidsieck Monopole, Henriot, Krug, Lanson, Laurent-Perrier, Mercier, Moët & Chandon, Mumm, Joseph Perrier, Pol Roger, and Pommery.

**Grower-Producers** There are 19 thousand growers in Champagne who own 88 percent of the vineyards, but only 2,124 of these produce wine under their own labels. The average vineyard, is very small, about 1 hectare, with only 30 growers owning vineyards larger than 14 hectares. These small growers lack the capital and expertise to market their own wine and instead sell grapes or base wine (*vins clairs*) to cooperatives or Champagne houses.

The growth in the Champagne market has prompted growers to become grower-producers, or *Récoltant Manipulant* (RM), and to produce their own Champagnes from their own grapes. Many of these are tiny traditional producers who produce average quality Champagnes that are sold within France and not exported. Other grower producers are making high quality Champagne for export. As of today more than 178 grower-producers are represented in the US market. Thanks to an expanding number of importers, most notably, pioneer Terry Theise of Michael Skurnik Wines in New York, consumers can now purchase outstanding Champagnes from small artisanal producers, albeit in small quantities.

What is special about grower Champagnes? At their best, these Champagnes are distinctive, expressive of their terroir, harmonious and refined and display great finesse. Whereas cross regional blending may be the norm for the *Grandes Marques*, independent family-run domaines source fruit from a much smaller and more well-defined and distinctive sets of vineyards. Some are also making

single vineyard Champagnes like Vilmart's Coeur de Cuvée made exclusively from the vineyard of Blanches Voies. Others produce wines known as "Special Club" cuvées (see box). Of course, some of the houses also produce special single vineyard or single cru Champagnes, but they are a tiny share of their overall production.

**Club Tresors de Champagne "Special Club"** The Special Club is a consortium of Grower-Producers which was created in the 1970's to show the world that the small houses can make wines every bit as good as the top of the line cuvées from the Grand Marques. Only the best wines from each Grower are submitted to a rigorous tasting panel. Approved Champagnes are given Special Club packaging in which a more rotund bottle is adorned with the name and label of the Special Club, all of which resides in a green box. Only on the center of the label will the name of the grower and vintage be listed. Several grower producers of Special Club cuvées such as Roland Champion, Pierre Gimmonet, and Henri Goutorbe are reviewed in the tasting notes at the end of this report:

## Styles Of Champagne

In this section, we examine the different styles of Champagnes being produced in the region today. [See Annex I for the permitted dosage of different styles.] This section also provides listings of Champagne's top producers of each style and the wines offered on the market at all price levels. These listings were derived from our extensive tastings, and while they are by no means exhaustive, our top selections provide a useful guide to some of the best producers and the best Champagnes in each style. Complete tasting notes for these wines are provided at the end of the report. In the following section, we discuss how to pair these different styles of Champagne with dishes throughout a meal.

### Extra Brut/Brut Nature

The driest Champagnes on the market are known as extra brut, ultra brut, brut nature, or zero dosage wines. These wines have little or no sugar in the dosage. In terms of taste they are bone dry and high in acid. Producers such as Ayala, Agrapart and others listed below are producing delicious extra brut wines in different styles including blanc de blancs and rosé. These wines are very fashionable among the cognoscenti and are also becoming more popular among wine enthusiasts who enjoy crisp dry wines.

### Non Vintage Brut

Over 90 percent of all Champagne is labeled brut. Few drinkers, however, have a clear understanding of what this means. In technical terms, it refers to an amount of sugar in the dosage (most often between 7 and 15 g/l). To our palate today, this tastes dry but not excessively so, and it seldom appears to be extraordinarily tart.

### Top Rated Brut Nature

Jacques Selosse	Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Version Originale	\$200	95+
René Geoffroy	2004 Millésime Extra Brut	\$124	94
Jacques Selosse	Ambonnay Le Bout du Clos Extra Brut Grand Cru	\$200	94
Duc de Romet	2004 Millésime Extra Brut	\$127	94
Veuve Fourny & Fils	Extra Brut Cuvée R 1 <sup>er</sup> Cru	\$60	93
Bérèche	Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Brut Nature	\$60	93
Laurent-Perrier	Ultra Brut	\$80	92
Gonet-Medeville	Rosé Extra Brut	\$69	92
René Geoffroy	Blanc de Rosé	\$115	92
Péhu-Simonet	Transparence Extra Brut	\$55	92+
Agrapart & Fils	2005 Minéral Extra Brut Grand Cru	\$65	92+
Pierre Gimmonnet et Fils	2005 Oenophile Maxi Brut Blanc de Blanc	\$72	92
Varnier-Fanniére	Cuvée de Jean Fanniére Origine Extra Brut	\$68	92
Mailly	Extra Brut The Special	\$39	91
Louis Roederer	Extra Dry Carte Blanche	\$43	91
Ayala	Zero Dosage Brut Nature	\$45	91
Besserat	NV Cuvée des Moines Extra Brut	\$55	90

Non-vintage bruts are blends of different vintage years. Champagne is one of the few AOC wines where such blending is common, and it stems from the fact that the quality of vintages in the Champagne region can be highly variable. Reserve wines from previous vintages are blended in with the current vintage to create a wine of consistent quality. The typical non-vintage brut of a large Champagne house is often a blend of dozens, if not hundreds, of individual lots. These are carefully blended to maintain a consistent "house style" that each producer has gradually nurtured, in some cases over several centuries. Consumers who indulge in Champagne infrequently are reassured by the unchanging character of these wines, and the winemaking teams headed by the chefs de cave go to great lengths to maintain the "house style".

It would be a mistake, however, to consider non-vintage bruts to be the best that the region has to offer. They

### Top Rated NV Brut

Krug	Grand Cuvée	\$150	96
Laurent Perrier	Grand Siècle	\$150	95+
Jacquesson	Cuvée Champagne	\$72	92+
Bollinger	Special Cuvée	\$65	92
Ayala	Brut Majeur	\$40	92
<u>Billecart-Salmon</u>	<u>Cuvée Sous Bois</u>	\$66	92
H. Billot	Cuvée Laetitia	\$106	92
René Geoffroy	NV Brut Cuvée Expression	\$50	92
Vilmart	NV Grand Celier Brut	\$74	92
Gonet-Medeville	NB Brut Tradition 1er Cru	\$55	91+
Marc Hébert	NV Brut Selection	\$53	91
Aubry, L	NV Brut	\$42	91
Charles Heidsieck	NV Brut Réserve	\$65	91
Jean Lallement	NV Brut	\$53	91
Bruno Paillard	NV Première	\$52	91
Louis Roederer	NV Brut Premier	\$43	91
Pierre Péters	Cuvée de Réserve	\$58	91
Pol Roger	NV Brut	\$35	91
Varnier-Fanniére	NV Brut Grand Cru	\$57	91
Bérèche	NV Brut Réserve	\$40	91
Veuve Clicquot	NV Brut (Yellow Label)	\$45	90+
Barons de Rothschild	NV Brut	\$100	90
Mailly	NV Brut Réserve	\$35	90
Laurent-Perrier	NV Brut	\$40	90
Duval-Leroy	NV Brut	\$29	90
Gaston Chiquet	Tradition Brut	\$48	90

are normally blended to be crisp and refreshing and as versatile as possible for different occasions. They are not meant to be complex or profound. Indeed, non-vintage Champagnes typically age for the shortest period of time, and much of the complexity in Champagne comes from the aging process.

### Vintage Brut

There are wines, of course, that are produced from one single vintage. In producing vintage dated wines the Champagne houses also try to capture the genius of a particular vintage. The legal minimum for aging increases to three years for this category, and some houses age these wines up to five years and more. Vintage wines are normally made with riper fruit, and the added concentration makes for a wine that is both more complex as well as more vinous, with more weight, power, and length on the finish. While vintage Champagnes are delicious on their own, they taste even better with food and have enough substance to age and improve for many years. Many of Champagne's finest producers and their premium cuvées fall into this category.

### Top Rated Vintage Brut

Louis Roederer	2005	Cristal	\$229	97
Ruinart	1998	Dom Ruinart	\$170	96
Pol Roger	1999	Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill	\$250	96
Henriot	1998	Cuvée des Enchanteleurs	\$199	95+
L. Aubry Fils	2006	Aubry de Humbert	\$89	94
Veuve Clicquot	1998	La Grande Dame	\$130	94
Bollinger	2002	La Grande Année	\$150	94
Vilmart et Cie	2004	Coeur de Cuvée	\$148	94
Nicolas Feuillatte	1999	Cuvée Palmes d' Or	\$135	94
Duc de Romet	2004	Millésime Extra Brut	\$127	94
Laurent Perrier	2002	Brut Millésime	\$70	93+
Moët & Chandon	2003	Dom Perignon	\$125	93+
Deutz	2005	Amour de Deutz Brut	\$165	93
Deutz	1999	Cuvée William Deutz Brut	\$124	93
Louis Roederer	2006	Vintage Brut	\$75	93
Henri Goutorbe	2005	<u>Cuvée Millésime Brut Grand</u>	\$64	93
Marc Hébrart	2006	<u>Gauche-Rive Droite Grand Cru Brut</u>	\$139	93
Moët & Chandon	2004	Grand Vintage Collection	\$55	93
Taittinger	2005	Cuvée Brut Millésime	\$70	93
Vilmart et Cie	2007	Grand Cellier d' Or	\$93	93
Piper-Heidsieck	2002	<u>Cuvée Rare Brut</u>	\$150	93
Pommery	1999	Cuvée Louise	\$170	93
Gosset	2000	Grand Millésime	\$100	93
Chartogne-Taillet	2006	Brut Millésime	\$65	93
Chartogne-Taillet	2006	Cuvée Flacre	\$75	93
Rene Geoffroy	2006	Volupté	\$84	93
Roland Champion	2007	Champagne Special Club	\$80	92+

Many houses, in fact, produce more than one type of vintage Champagne. It is increasingly common that one will be released three to five years after the vintage, followed by another bottling that has undergone longer aging. During this aging process, the yeasts that provoked the second fermentation have begun to break down, yielding complex notes that show the influence of the yeast, such as aromas of brioche or biscuits. As these wines age, they can show more savory and substantial aromas that pass from toasty to smoky and finally to ground coffee and soy sauce. The Champagnes that have undergone additional aging are most often known as "late disgorged", and may be released anywhere from 12 to 25 years after the

vintage. Examples of wines produced in this way that are currently on the market include the Moët & Chandon 19 Vintage Collection, Bollinger R.D. (for recently disgorged), the Dom Pérignon Oenothèque, the Veuve Clicquot Rare Vintage, and the Krug Collection. Even growers such as Diebolt-Vallois in Cramant are getting into the act with their Fleur de Passion bottling.

## Blanc de Blancs

Blanc de blancs is produced only from Chardonnay grapes, giving an extremely elegant and light result. In fact, blanc de blancs in French means a white Champagne made from a white grape—Chardonnay. While Chardonnay makes a fine and delicate wine, it also produces one capable of long aging and great depth of flavor. Blanc de blancs can be produced as either non-vintage or vintage, and the grapes can be grown anywhere in the region. While the Côte de Blancs is well known for Chardonnay, the grape is also grown on the Montagne de Reims. Ruinart Blanc de Blancs, for example, is produced from a mixture of both.

Most blanc de blancs are lighter-bodied and delicate bruts such as Pierre Gimmonet's Cuvée Gastronomer; others are crisp and highly acidic like the Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs of Seloise or the Grand Cru Mineral from Agrapart. In general, blanc de blancs are often rather austere when young but age well and develop more complexity and length. Fuller-bodied blanc de blancs like Taittinger's 2000 Cuvée Comtes de Champagne can age for up to 20+ years and those from Grand Cru villages like Avize, Cramant, le Mesnil sur-Oger and Oger are of a very high quality and develop complexity and richness of flavor as they age.

### Top Rated NV Blanc de Blancs

Stephane Coquillette	Blanc de Blancs Cuvée Diane Brut	\$65	93
Diebolt-Vallois	Blanc des Blancs "Cuveé Prestige"	\$70	93
Libert-Fils	Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru	\$65	93
Pierre Moncuit	NV Moncuit-Delos Grand Cru	\$58	93
Pierre Gimmonnet et Fils	Blanc de Blancs Cuvée Cuis 1er Cru	\$51	93
Pehu-Simonet	Blanc de Blancs Brut	\$72	92+
Henriot	Blanc de Blancs	\$60	92
Marc Hebart	Blanc de Blancs	\$51	92
Billecart-Salmon	Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru	\$80	92
Jean Milan	Cuvée de Réserve	\$64	92
Varnier-Fanniére	Cuvée St. Denis Brut	\$67	92
Jean Laurent	Blanc de Blancs	\$55	91
Ruinart	Blanc de Blancs	\$55	91
Gaston Chiquet	Blanc de Blancs Brut d'Aÿ	\$55	91
Henri Goutorbe	Blanc de Blancs Brut	\$59	91

### Top Rated Vintage Blanc de Blancs

Taittinger	2000	Cuvée Comtes de Champagne	\$150	94
Pasqual Doquet	2002	Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs le Mesnil sur Oger	\$106	94
Saint Chamant	2002	Millesime Brut Blanc de Blancs	\$90	94
Jacques Seloise	2002	Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs	\$225	94
Pierre Gimmonnet et Fils	2006	Fleuron Brut Blanc de Blancs	\$61	93
Libert-Fils	2005	Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru	\$100	93
Louis Roederer	2005	Blanc de Blancs	\$85	93
Gaston Chiquet	2004	Réserve Blanc de Blancs	\$153*	93
Roland Champion	2004	Blanc de Blancs	\$66	92
Pierre Péters	2005	Cuvée Spéciale Les Chetillons Millésime	\$118	91+
Deutz		Blanc de Blancs	\$74	91

\*magnum

## Blanc de Noirs

Just as a blanc de blancs is produced exclusively from Chardonnay, a Champagne designated blanc de noirs is produced exclusively from the black grapes Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Blanc de noirs often reveal floral aromas and have a deep yellow-gold color. While this style is not nearly so common as Chardonnay, there are many fine blanc de noirs on the market such as those produced by Pehu Simonet, Egly-Ouriet and others listed in the following table. Bollinger's Cuvée Vieille Vignes Françaises Blanc de Noirs was not reviewed for this report.

### Top Rated Blanc de Noirs

Pehu Simonet	Blanc de Noirs Brut	\$72	94
Chartogne-Taillet	2007 Cuvée Orizeaux Extra-Brut	\$86	93
Chartogne-Taillet	2007 Cuvée Les Barres Extra-Brut	\$101	93
Egly-Ouriet	NV Brut "Tradition" Grand Cru	\$89	93
Barnaut	Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru	\$54	93
Gonet-Medeville	Blanc de Noirs Brut 1er Cru	\$60	92
Jean Laurent	2000 Blanc de Noir	\$52	91+
Cedric Bouchard	Rosés de Jeanne	\$55	91
Lamiable	2005 Grand Cru Blanc de Noirs Les Meslaines	\$70	91
Stephane Coquillette	Cuvée Les Clés Blanc de Noirs Brut	\$53	91
Mailly	NV Blanc de Noirs The Special	\$45	90
Jean Vesselle	Oeil de Pedrix	\$54	90
Moussé	Or Tradition Blanc de Noirs	\$49	89

## Rosé Champagne

Another type of Champagne is rosé; few types of wine have enjoyed the boom in popularity that rosé Champagne has experienced in recent years. Rosé Champagne is made from the same grape blends as are the non-rosé or blanc Champagnes. All the color in grapes is contained in the skin, and when the grapes are delicately pressed and contact with the skins is rigorously avoided, a white wine can be produced from black grapes. When a rosé is desired, it is sufficient to ferment a portion of the black grapes on the skins in order to extract the appropriate shade of pink. However, producers also may add up to 10 to 15% of regular Pinot Noir wine for color.

The color is not the only difference in rosé Champagne, however. The aroma is also greatly changed. While the aromatic range of blanc Champagnes can go from citrus

to apple to pear to pineapple, rosé Champagnes tend to be much more focused on red berry fruit: strawberry, wild strawberry, raspberry, blackberry and currant. The texture of rosé Champagne is also quite different – it gives much more of a wine-like impression, and can approach a Pinot Noir from Burgundy in weight, balance and length.

Rosé Champagnes can be produced in either a vintage or a non-vintage style, and the character of the wines can range from romantic and slightly frivolous to savory, rich and complex. With the exception of the very best ones, Champagne rosés do not age well, perhaps due to the fact they have lower acidity from the addition of Pinot Noir.

Rosé Champagnes are among some of the “biggest” Champagnes and can be successfully paired with rich foods, from grilled tuna to roast duck and even roast lamb. Because of the prestige and the scarcity of some of these wines, rosés often sell at a considerable premium to the blancs of the same producer.

#### Top Rated NV Rosé

Bollinger	NV Brut Rosé	\$100	95
Laurent Perrier	NV Brut Cuvée Rose	\$100	94
Pascal Doquet	Côtes de Blancs Rosé 1 <sup>er</sup> Cru	\$66	93
Billecart-Salmon	NV Rosé	\$74	93
Varnier-Fannière	NV Rosé Brut	\$75	93
Stephane Coquille	NV Rosé Marie Aimer Brut	\$70	92+
Gosset	NV Grand Rosé	\$86	92
Pehu-Simonet	NV Brut Rosé	\$61	92
Pierre Gimmonnet et Fils	NV Brut Rosé de Blancs	----	92
L. Aubry Fils	NV Brut Rosé	\$59	92
Ayala	Rosé Majeur	\$50	92
Jean Milan	NV Brut Rosé Glamour	\$65	92
H. Billiot	NV Brut Rosé Grand Cru	\$60	92
Jean Lallement	NV Brut Rosé	\$68	92
Henri Goutorbe	NV Brut Rosé Grand Cru	\$60	92
Pierre Péters	NV Rosé for Albane	\$72	92
A. Margaine	NV Rosé	\$57	91+
Bruno Paillard	NV Brut Rosé	\$80	91
Champagne Barons de Rothschild	NV Brut Rosé	\$125	91
Duc de Romet	NV Blanc de Rosé	\$115	91
Marc Hébrart	NV Rosé Brut	\$54	91
Veuve Fourny & Fils	Rosé Brut 1 <sup>er</sup> Cru	\$56	91
Moussé	NV Rosé Tradition Brut	\$53	91
René Geoffroy	NV Blanc de Rosé	115	90+
Gaston Chiquet	NV Rosé	\$54	90+
Duval-Leroy	NV Rosé Prestige	\$65	90+
Jean Vesselle	NV Rosé de Saignée	\$54	90

#### Top Rated Vintage Rosé

Ruinart	1998	Dom Ruinart Brut Rosé	\$300	96
Veuve Clicquot	1989	La Grand Dame Brut Rosé	\$225	94+
Perrier-Jouët	2004	Fleur de Champagne Rosé Cuvée Belle-Epoque Brut	\$279	92
Louis Roederer	2007	Vintage Rosé	\$75	92
Nicolas Feuillatte	2004	Palm D' Or Rosé	\$200	90

## Demi-Sec

The sweetest Champagnes commonly seen today are referred to as demi-sec, meaning that they contain 35 to 50 g/l of sugar. This is a very interesting category, and even top-notch artisanal producers such as Jacques Selosse make a demi-sec. The wine from Selosse is called “Exquis”, as indeed it is. More commercial versions are produced by Piper Heidsieck and Moët & Chandon.

## Top Rated Demi-Sec

Jean Vesselle	Demi-Sec Rosé	\$60	91
Ayala	Rich Majeur Demi-Sec	\$40	90
Mailly	Délice	\$45	90
A. Margaine	Demi-Sec	\$50	90
Laurent-Perrier	Demi-Sec	\$45	89
Pol Roger	Cuvée de Reserve Demi-Sec	\$48	89
Moët Chandon	Nectar Imperial	\$58	88
Moët Chandon	Nectar Imperial Rosé	\$60	88

**What Do Bubbles Tell You?** Are tiny bubbles an indicator of Champagne quality? According to sparkling wine authority Tom Stevenson, tiny bubbles signal quality in sparkling wine because the smaller and more numerous they are the smoother the mousse. Tiny particles, or colloids, and protein in a wine help release the carbon dioxide trapped in solution by the pressure in the bottle. Bubble size is affected by both the length of time a Champagne ages *en triage*, and by the temperature of the aging cellar. Older Champagnes usually have fewer bubbles than younger ones. And soapy glasses can prevent the release of bubbles from champagne as well. Bollinger estimates that a bottle of Champagne contains 56 million bubbles!

## Champagne with Food



Champagne is very versatile with food. It goes well with almost everything, but the trick is finding what it accompanies most successfully. While there is no better way to start a meal than with Champagne, it pairs beautifully with a wide variety of dishes throughout

a meal—from caviar and all types of raw bar offerings to poultry, roast duck, salmon, and venison. Champagne also enriches desserts from delicate lemon tarts to fruits and pastries, and its effervescence is terrific with omelets, Eggs Benedict, and other egg dishes commonly served at brunch.

Champagne can be served with any and all courses throughout a meal. In the accompanying table, we offer readers suggestions for pairing Champagne with a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres, main courses and desserts. These suggestions were culled from many sources, but mainly from guidelines developed over centuries for pairing food and wine and the tasting menus of contemporary chefs who prepare menus for special Champagne dinners.<sup>4</sup>

The table is organized by the different styles of Champagne discussed earlier in the report. Particular styles of Champagne usually go best with certain foods. In principle, the more delicate the food, the more delicate the wine,

<sup>4</sup>One of the best references we have run across on pairing Champagne and food is *Chefs & Champagne “a la carte”* by Ragnar Fridriksson published by Passion-food in collaboration with Editions du Coq a l'An

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Style of Champagne	Apéritifs/Hors D'Oeuvres	Poultry, Pork, Veal, Beef	Fish and Seafood	Eggs and other dishes	Dessert and Cheese	Comments
<b>Blanc de Blancs</b>						
Light-and medium-bodied-100% Chardonnay, fine and elegant with clean flavors and generally characterized by high acidity and minerality	All types of raw bar offerings: shrimp, scallops, oysters, mussels, calamari etc.		Sushi-Sashimi Dover sole, Poached salmon	Omelettes, poached eggs, Quiche	Goat cheese  Delicate lemon tart, Lemon Meringue Pie	Try ultra brut Champagne with raw bar offerings. also Blanc de Blanc is superb with egg dishes and especially eggs with mushrooms or truffles
	Crudités		Grilled fresh trout			
Full- Bodied-100% Chardonnay, showing great depth of flavor with autolytic aromas, toast, and possibly cedar			Grilled salmon Lobster broiled or baked Crab Imperial	Escabeche of Vegetables		
<b>Non-Vintage and Vintage Brut</b>	Salmon Mouseline	Breast of Veal				
Non-Vintage Champagne, Chardonnay, Blanc de Noir and Pinot-based blends. Great variability in styles from rich and creamy to fruit forward, crisp and elegant	Smoked Salmon/Salmon Tartar	Baked or roasted chicken		Pasta dishes and risotto with mushrooms and truffles  Creamy soups, purees	Gouda	Avoid pairing Champagne with pungent cheeses. Gouda works well with Champagnes that have a nutty flavor. Also avoid pairing Champagne with pasta dishes that have tomato sauce; Champagne and tomatoes don't work well together.
			Tuna			
Full-bodied Vintage Brut Champagne with a good amount of age and complexity, autolytic aromas	Dim sum such as prawn dumplings, spring rolls	Duck, sweetbread with morels	Sushi  Brandade, Chilean sea bass cooked with Champagne Braised Tuna, Swordfish, Halibut	Mushroom risotto, Mushroom Ragout	Chevre	Truffles and Champagne work well together especially when the Champagne has smoky dryness.  Champagne is ideal to drink with fried food; The heavier the sauce, the more full-bodied the Champagne; pates require champagnes with firm acidity

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<b>Non-Vintage and Vintage Rosé</b>										
Non-vintage Roses offer red berry fruit, flavors and can be fun and romantic.	Fruit Soups	Roast Turkey, ham								Rosé Champagne works well with Thanksgiving turkey and all the side dishes, including cranberries.
Non-Vintage Light and medium-bodied Rose		Roast duck with red currant sauce, Quail with pomegranate glaze, Guinea hen with honey coated cranberries Coq au vin Rare Roasted Venison, Rare Lamb, Beef Tenderloin Braised beef, ham Chacuterie, Carbonnade of beef	Trout filets, Quenelles, Tuna Tartare Bouillabaisse Crayfish Grilled or Smoked Salmon							Try a NV Rosé with smoked duck salad, also Roasts with red berries and glazes work well with Rosé
<b>Full bodied Rose</b>										Vintage rosé pairs beautifully with pink lamb Try these full-bodied complex Champagnes with meat dishes that also include truffles
<b>Sweet Styles (Demi Sec)</b>			Curries and spicy oriental dishes, Wild Salmon Roulade	Blue veined cheeses		Strawberries, raspberries or other fresh fruits, pastries,	Chocolate desserts			Chocolate does not usually pair well with Champagne, except when the Champagne is sweet.

and the richer the food, the fuller the wine. For example, the clean flavors and high acidity of blanc de blancs go best with sea food, fish, and more delicate dishes, while full-bodied non-vintage and vintage Champagnes pair beautifully with rich dishes of duck confit, rabbit and foie gras. And Champagne is a wonderful accompaniment to spicy fried foods like dim sum, dumplings, and curries. Readers should keep in mind that the accompanying table is only intended to offer suggestions for pairing Champagne with food. Our hope is that you will be stimulated and encouraged to pursue your own inclinations for pairing Champagne with food, as would a creative chef or sommelier. When you make the right choices, you will derive great gustatory pleasure from your accomplishment.

### Serving Temperature for Champagne

The best temperature for serving Champagne with food is between 40-45 degrees F. This temperature is ideal for a slow release of the mousse and preventing the wine from going flat. The smell and taste of Champagne are also at their best at this temperature range. Placing Champagne in a bucket of ice with water or in the refrigerator is the best way to chill it but care needs to be taken to avoid over-chilling the wines.

## How to Read a Champagne Label



Knowing how to read a Champagne label can help you make the right choice of Champagne for your next meal or for a gift during the holiday season. Here are 7 tips:

1. This may seem obvious, but the first thing to look for is the name Champagne, and the fact that it is produced in France. Although Champagne is a protected name throughout much of the world, some producers in the U.S. continue to use this designation. Anything produced in France, bearing the name Champagne will be the real thing. Not all producers, however, are equal, and not all Champagne is good.
2. Look for the name of certain producers. Our tasting guide will help you find the top producers. In general, the name of the producer, house, or grower is very important in selecting Champagne. The name Champagne itself is not a guarantee of quality, just authenticity.

3. What is the sweetness level, or grade? Is the Champagne really dry, medium dry, or sweet? Look for terms such as Brut, Extra Dry/Zero Dosage, or Demi-Sec. Our chart in Annex I explains the range. The most popular styles in the U.S. are Brut, and Extra Dry (Extra Sec). Sec, Demi-Sec and Doux can be too sweet as aperitifs or with food other than dessert.

4. Is the wine vintage or non-vintage? If the label does not show a vintage year, the Champagne is a non-vintage. This simply means the Champagne has wine from at least two or more vintages. Almost all non-vintages contain at least 5-10% of a reserve wine from a previous vintage. The better non-vintages can have up to 50% reserve wine from 7 or 8 vintages going back 10-15 years. Non-Vintage Champagne was created to off set the difficulties and lack of ripeness during poor years. This is not to say, however, that NV Champagne is of a lesser quality than vintage Champagnes. Some of the best Champagnes made are multi vintage wines that do not bear a vintage date. Vintage Champagne comes from a single year and by law it must be 100% from the year indicated.

5. The back label may tell you the grapes used for the Champagne. If not, it is probably a blend. Blanc de Blancs indicates it is all Chardonnay; Blanc de Noirs indicates it is only Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

6. Look for initials at the bottom of the label to determine the type of producer that made the Champagne. A two letter initial, in front of a number, reveals a lot about who made the wine. (See Box)

### Initials of Major Types of Producers

#### NM: Négociant-Manipulant

Producers or companies that buy grapes from growers, blend finished wine and produce large quantities of Champagne.

#### CM: Coopérative-Manipulant

These growers pool their grapes and sell them to houses on behalf of their members. They also make and sell Champagne.

#### RM: Récoltant-Manipulant

These are Growers who make and sell their own Champagne. They may buy and sell grapes. This includes many artisan Champagne producers.

#### RC: Récoltant-Coopérative

RC is a type of grower who sells Champagne and grapes to negociants. The grower sells champagne under his own label but produces it at a cooperative.

7. See if the Champagne has the date of disgorgement on the back label. While it is not required (although it should be), not all producers put the date of disgorgement on the back label. This date may help you determine the condition of the Champagne. Some people prefer to drink Champagne as fresh as possible, while others like lots of bottle age. Some producers, such as Bollinger, produce recently disgorged vintage wines. Many artisan producers now provide the date of disgorgement on the back label.

# The Market for Champagne

Shipments of Champagne grew rapidly in the second half of the 20th century, from 33 million bottles in 1950 to 100 million in 1970, 200 million in 1986, and 300 million in 1999. Total shipments in 2011 were 323 million with sales growth slowed by macroeconomic conditions. As shown in the graph, France is by far the world's largest consumer of Champagne, consuming 56 percent of the total, followed by the UK at 11 percent and the US at 6 percent.



Under the current AOC boundaries there is a limit of 34 thousand hectares of vineyards, almost all of which has now been planted. Given maximum permitted yields, this translates into 383 million bottles of Champagne, just 60 million bottles more than shipments in 2011. Meanwhile, the consumption of Champagne has been increasing rapidly among a couple of very large countries experiencing high economic growth: exports to Brazil increased 51%, and exports to China increased 47% over the period 2008-2011.<sup>5</sup> If, with continued economic growth, China came to consume as much Champagne per capita as Japan, that alone would take another 78 million bottles. Even if the AOC increases vineyard space in Champagne another 10-15 percent, at some point global demand will exceed supply, and prices will rise to bring about market equilibrium.

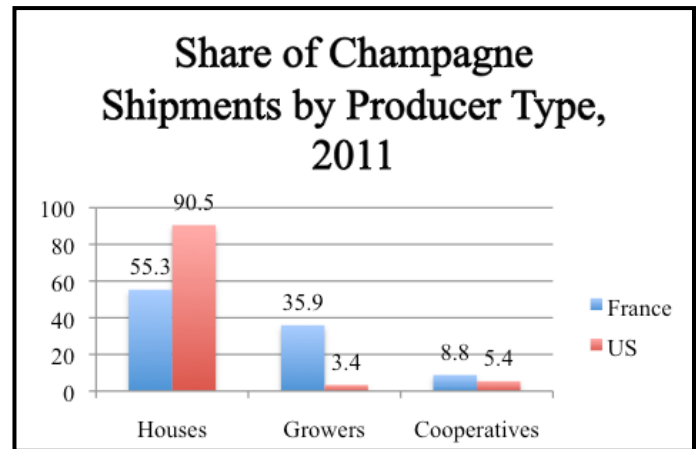
## The US Market for Champagne

As noted above, the US is the world's third largest market for Champagne, although its per capita consumption of sparkling wine in general and Champagne in particular is relative low. While on per capita terms the US consumes one-fifth the amount of still wine as France, its consumption of sparkling wine is smaller still—just one-tenth that of France and about two-fifths that of the UK. The US not only consumes less Champagne per capita than France or the UK, it also purchases different Champagne. As shown

in the graph, almost three-quarters of Champagne shipped to the US comes from just the top five houses, a much higher percentage than that of France or the UK.



The US, in general, gets most (90+%) of its Champagne from large Champagne houses and a small percentage from growers and cooperatives. Perhaps due to the challenges to small producers of exporting and marketing wine in the US, grower Champagnes have just one-tenth the market share they have in France.



<sup>5</sup>Based on the calculations by Olivier Cossy, administrator of Les Jeunes Viticulteurs de la Champagne, as cited in Michael Edwards (2009) *Champagne*.

## Tasting Notes and Ratings



Mike Potashnik, Publisher, and Don Winkler, Editor, tasted more than 250 Champagnes for this report. The tastings were held at the IWR offices, with importers in New York, and during our visit to Champagne in September 2012.

The Champagnes reviewed here are a broad selection of those produced in Champagne by the Grand Marques, grower-producers and cooperatives. Virtually all the wines are of premium quality sourced from Grand Cru and Premier Cru vineyards as classified by the *Eschelle des Crus*.

The tasting notes and ratings are organized by producer. We provide brief background information on each house, grower-producer and cooperative for the Champagnes we have reviewed. We also list the importer in most instances and retail prices for imports, although no prices are given for wines which are not imported. The most highly rated wines are also listed by style in an earlier section of the report.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

95 and above	A wine of distinction
91-94	A wine of outstanding or superior quality
89-90	A wine of very good to excellent quality
87-88	A wine of good quality
85-86	A wine of fair or acceptable quality
84 and below	Not recommended

**Agrapart & Fils** This is a small winemaker-grower estate in the Côte des Blancs crafting some magnificent Champagnes. Since 1984 it has been run by Pascal Agrapart and his brother Fabrice. Its Champagnes are crafted from several Grand Cru vineyards such as Oger, Cramant, Olry and Avize, which are worked manually and without pesticides. Pascal Agrapart produces Champagne using a traditional Coquard press, malolactic fermentation and partial aging in old demi-muids.

**Agrapart & Fils 2005 Minerals Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$65) 92+** A beautiful wine that is very nicely structured and focused and made of 100% Chardonnay from 50-year-old vines from Grand Cru vineyards of Avize and Cramant. Showing rich and delicate stone fruit, citrus and leesy flavors, it's perfectly balanced with great acidity. A combination of used barrels and stainless steel tanks are used for fermentation with 3-4 g dosage.

**L Aubry Fils** Philippe Aubry crafts these highly original wines at his 17-hectare estate in the Montagne de Reims. His vineyards are all Premier Cru. In addition to producing Champagnes from the three main grapes, Aubry experiments with little known ancient varieties like Arbanne, Petit Meslier and Fromenteau. All his wines see secondary fermentation. **Importer:** Terry These Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, N.Y.



**L. Aubry Fils NV Brut (\$42) 91** The Aubry non-vintage brut is heavily based (45%) on Pinot Meunier with lesser amounts of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and small amounts of other varieties. It is dry and stony, showing flowers and high toned fruit on the nose and has a palate of chalky minerals and lemon citrus. Made 55% of 2009 base wines and 45% solera-reserve wines and aged 24 months on the lees with 6 g sugar. **L. Aubry Fils 2007 Le Nobre d'Or Sable Blanc des Blancs (\$82) 91** (Disgorged June 2012). Fresh, leesy and uncomplicated, this wine shows orchard fruit aromas and flavors on a lightly effervescent palate. Made from a blend of 30% Chardonnay, 30% Petit Meslier, 20% Arbanne, and 20% Pinot Blanc and aged 4+ years on the lees, with 2 g/l dosage. **L. Aubry Fils 2008 Ivoire et Ebene Brut (\$70) 92** (Disgorged March 2012). This partially oak-fermented Brut reveals entrancing scents of yellow flowers and toasted nuts and a refined, pleasingly rich palate that finishes with chalky mineral notes. Made of 60% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir, and 20% Meunier with 4 years on the lees and 3 g/l dosage. **L. Aubry Fils 2006 Aubry de Humbert (\$89) 94** Made of equal parts Chardonnay (oak fermented), Pinot Noir and Meunier, this is our favorite of the Aubry Champagnes. Medium yellow straw in color, it is lightly oxidized on the nose with brioche notes. The very flavorful, powerful palate reveals cured lemon with nutty autolytic and mineral notes that persist forever on the finish. Big but elegant. Aged 5+ years with a dosage of 6 g/l. **L. Aubry Fils NV Brut Rosé (\$59) 92** This is what most people want in a Rosé Champagne—a medium salmon color, a dry nose with hints of dried cherries, and a light, creamy palate showing subtle red berry flavors and finishing dry and long. Beautifully done. A blend of 35% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, 12% Meunier, and 13% Meunier vin rouge aged 24 months with a dosage of 3 g/l.

**Ayala** One of the Grand Marques of Champagne, Ayala has important holdings in Aÿ and Mareuil. Purchased by the Bollinger Group in 2005, the estate has been revitalized and is producing excellent NV low dosage Brut Nature and zero dosage Champagnes. The NV Rosé is stunning. **Importer:** Cognac One, New York, NY



**Ayala NV Brut Majeur (\$40) 92** The stylish, pale copper salmon NV Brute Majeur is a blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Meunier. 80% of the blend is from the 2008 vintage and 20%

from Réserve wines. It offers a full mousse and a rich, fruit forward nose of light cherry, green apple, yeast and a hint of nuts. It is refined and elegant on the palate with a hint of minerality, a lovely mouth feel, and a persistent finish. **NV Zéro Dosage Brut Nature (\$45) 91** This Brut Nature is a blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 20% Meunier. It offers aromas of yellow flowers, nuts and red berries with light yeast and mineral notes. It shows bright acidity on the attack and a fully flavored, very dry and fresh palate. **Ayala NV Rosé Majeur (\$50)**

**92** Light salmon in color, this delicious Rosé is a blend of 51% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, 10% Pinot Meunier, and 9% old vines red Pinot Noir. It offers dried cherry aromas and flavors and is light and delicate on the attack with a creamy mouth feel, high acidity and a crisp finish.

**Ayala NV Rich Majeur Demi-Sec (\$40) 90** Champagne Ayala's Demi-Sec is a blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Meunier. Yellow gold in color, it offers aromas of ripe orchard fruit. Aged on the lees for 2.5 years, it is rich and creamy on the palate with sweet ripe fruit flavors and excellent balance and freshness. The grapes are sourced from vineyards with an average Echelle des Crus rating of 93%.

**Barnaut** In 1985 Philippe Secondè took the helms of this family owned winery, established by Edmond Barnaut in Bouzy in 1874, and modernized the winery and altered viticulture to lutte raisonnée. Today he farms 12 ha of Grand Cru vineyards (88% Pinot Noir, 12% Chardonnay) in Bouzy and 5.4 ha in the Marne Valley. The Champagnes show the red fruit character of Pinot Noir with superb freshness. **Importer:** Vintage '59 Imports, Washington DC



**Barnaut NV Grande Réserve Grand Cru (\$54) 91** The Grande Réserve represents 65% of the total Barnaut production. It offers citrus, honeysuckle and lees on the nose, is fresh and crisp on the attack, and delivers a mouth filling, flavorful palate with a bright red raspberry note. Beautifully balanced with good acidity and freshness.

**Barnaut NV Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru (\$54) 93** Made entirely from Bouzy Pinot Noir, the Blanc de Noirs shows brioche, dried cherry and a hint of earth on the nose, followed by a creamy palate of delicious light cherry with autolytic and toast notes on the palate. A very inviting Champagne that lingers on the finish.

**Noël Bazin 2007 L'Exigeante Blanc de Blancs Brut Marmery Champagne 89** Made from Chardonnay fruit sourced in the Vallée de la Marne on clay and sand soil. Yeast and herbs show on the nose, while the palate is broad, revealing ripe apple and a clean, crisp finish. 9g/l dosage. Noël Bazin works mostly with Chardonnay grown

in Villers-Marmery 1er Cru in the Vallée de la Marne, not an area where Chardonnay has traditionally been grown.

**Bérèche et Fils** Located in Ludes, the Bérèche family has made wines here since 1847. With 9.5 ha of vineyards in the Montagne de Reims and the Vallée de Marne, Raphaël now makes the wine, while brother Vincent tends the vines. The estate is gradually replacing crown caps with cork for the secondary fermentation. The Champagnes are for the most part quite boldly flavored but with good finesse on the palate. **Importer:** Valley View Wine Imports, Richmond CA



**Bérèche NV Brut Réserve (\$40) 91** Made of one-third each Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Meunier, but red berries are prominent on both the nose and palate along with notes of almonds, toast, and chalky minerals. The wine is crisp and focused with excellent acidity and a fine balance. The base wine is 2010 with about 30%

reserve wines and a dosage of 8 g/l. **Bérèche NV Extra Brut Réserve 91** Another blend of one-third each Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Meunier, this wine is made from 2008 base wine and kept on the lees for 3 years and given just 2 g/l dosage. It is light and delicate in character with scents of white flowers, summer melon, biscuit and red berries, which are supplemented in the mouth with notes of almond, brioche, and tropical fruit. **Bérèche 2005 Le Cran Ludes 1er Cru Montagne de Reims 92** This 50/50 Pinot Noir and Chardonnay blend is a great food wine with the assertive, mouth filling character to pair with weighty dishes. The wine is rich and leesy with notes of yellow flowers and pear nectar on the nose and brioche, almonds and dried fruit on the palate. It has a rich, round mouth feel and finishes with dry, chalky notes. Aged on cork. **Bérèche NV Les Beaux Regards Chardonnay Brut Nature (\$60) 93** Made of barrel fermented, cork aged, 2008 base Chardonnay with zero dosage, this is in fact a vintage wine that is both refined and boldly flavored. It's overtly aromatic with flowers, bread dough and tropical fruit scents, followed by a beautiful, focused palate showing toasted almonds and brioche with a long mineral and chalk finish. **Bérèche NV Reflet d'Antan 91** Made of 100% reserve wine of all three varieties, mostly from the 2008 vintage, this is what used to be called Cremant de Champagne, with just 5 bars pressure and a delicate, petillant palate. The wine shows rich almond and butter biscuits on the nose and a palate that's lightly flavored of ripe honeyed pear, finishing very dry and chalky. It had been disgorged just one week prior to tasting and will be available on the market in March of 2013. **Bérèche NV Rosé 90+** A blend of Meunier and red wine Pinot Noir, this is an easy drinking, quite straightforward style rosé. It shows red berries and pomegranate fruit and is soft on the palate with a mouth filling mousse. Just disgorged at the time of tasting, this wine has promise but needs more time in bottle to show its best. Just 2g residual sugar.

**Bertrand-Delespierre Tradition Brut 1er Cru Champagne**

**(\$55) 92** This is a richly fragrant Champagne revealing melon, dried red berry, brioche and light sherry like notes on both the nose and palate. It's mouth filling, flavorful and nicely balanced with bracing acidity and a long finish. A blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 35% Pinot Meunier, and 25% Chardonnay using a blend of 60% wines from the most recent harvest and 40% reserve wines and no malo. Didier Bertrand and Chantal Delespierre are grower-producers farming 10 ha in the Montagne de Reims, mostly in the 1er Cru village of Chamery. Importer: Handpicked Selections, Warrenton VA.

**Besserat.** Founded in 1843, Besserat is today part of the Bruno Paillard portfolio of Champagnes. The Cuvée des Moines line is done crémant style with lower bottle pressure and lower dosage than normal, which combined with no malolactic fermentation ensures crisp acidity and a fruit-forward profile. **Importer:** Wine-sellers Ltd, Niles IL

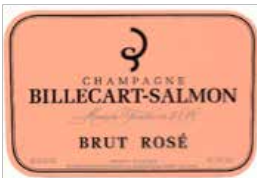


**Besserat NV Cuvée des Moines**

**Extra Brut (\$55) 90** The Extra Brut is assertively styled with ripe orchard and berry fruit and brioche on the nose and ripe apple and yeast flavors on the palate with light oxidized notes. This Champagne will show best with food. **Besserat NV**

**Cuvée des Moines Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$60) 91** Made of Chardonnay from several Grand Cru vineyards, this is our favorite Besserat Champagne. Fragrant pear, melon and yeast appear on the nose, while the palate is clean and full with crisp acidity and a very dry, long, and creamy finish. **Besserat NV Cuvée des Moines Rosé Brut (\$55) 89** Light salmon pink in color, this very flavorful sparkler reveal aromas and flavors of dried and fresh cherry, brioche, and apple. It has a soft, lush palate and offers easy drinking. Perfect for festive occasions. **Besserat 2002 Cuvée Des Moines Brut Millésime (\$60) 92** Medium gold. This Champagne offers ripe apple, yellow fruit, baking spice, and biscuits on the nose. It is very creamy in the mouth with butter toast, hints of tobacco and minerals on the deeply flavored palate. Finishes long with precision and depth.

**Billecart-Salmon** Brothers François and Antoine Roland-Billecart manage this historic, family-owned Champagne house. Today they have 30 ha of vines in Marueil-sur-Aÿ and 9 ha in Damery, which is known for its Pinot Meunier. Grapes are sourced from more than 40 crus with partial barrel fermentation of grand crus destined for vintage cuvees. The Brut Rosé is one of the very best in Champagne. **Importer:** T. Edward Wines, New York, NY



**Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru**

**(\$80) 92** A classic Blanc de Blancs with bright, clean fruit sourced mostly from the Côte de Blancs, it shows fresh orchard fruit on the nose. In the mouth,

it's delicate, clean and crisp with a buttery texture and chalky finish. Surprisingly suave and feminine. **Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Rosé (\$74) 93** Onion skin in color, this is a pale, delicate rosé of great finesse. It offers light raspberry and red berry fruit aromas with just a hint of orange skin, a rich mousse, and a luxurious, texturally rich palate in perfect balance and harmony. Includes about 40-45% Chardonnay. It is among the finest non-vintage rosés in Champagne today. **Billecart-Salmon NV Cuvée Sous Bois (\$66) 92** The oak fermented Cuvée Sous Bois spends 5 years on the lees and sees no malo. It shows aromas of flowers, melon, red berries and toast and is subtly flavored of vanilla beans and lemon citrus. It's full-bodied, elegant, and beautifully balanced. A blend of one-third each Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier fermented and aged in oak with about 2/3 coming from the 2006 vintage and 1/3 from 2005 and 2004 reserve wines.

**H. Billiot** Serge Billiot, who made this domaine famous, is gradually turning responsibilities over to his daughter Laetitia and her husband. The vineyards are all Grand Cru, about 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay, and just 5 ha in size, spread over 18 different mid-slope parcels, some of the best in Ambonnay. The wines do not undergo malo and are not filtered. They offer abundant, fresh fruit in an elegant Champagne. **Importer:** Terry These Selections/Michael Skurnick, Syosset, NY



**H. Billiot NV Réserve Brut (\$56) 91**

The Réserve Brut offers fresh bread, white flowers and hints of citrus and apple. It's broad and rich without being over-ripe with a creamy, well-balanced mouth feel. Superb for an entry level wine. A blend

of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay that spends 24 months en tirage and has a dosage of 10 g/l. **H. Billiot NV Cuvée Laetitia Brut (\$106) 92** Billiot's most famous Champagne, named after his daughter, is a solera-type blend of vintages dating back to 1983, mostly Chardonnay. It spends 30 months en triage with a dosage of 8g/l. It offers an exotic perfume and an elegant, complex palate with prominent autolytic and lightly toasted hazelnut and spice notes complementing pear and citrus fruit. Despite the age of the solera, there's nothing tired about this Champagne. **H. Billiot NV Brut Rosé Grand Cru (\$60) 92** The Pinot Noir that mostly makes up this Champagne shows brightly with light cherry and red berry notes permeating a rich, balanced palate. Pale salmon in color, this is a complex and very satisfying rosé. It has 10 g/l residual sugar.

**Bollinger** Well known for barrel fermenting a high percentage of its wines and then using the costly process of bottling reserve wines in magnums under cork, Bollinger makes bold wines, mostly from estate fruit. Bollinger is one of the last independent, family managed Champagne houses. Its reserve wine system is unique in Champagne. Bollinger is part of the Société Jacques Bollinger, which also owns Ayala.Champagne. **Importer:** Empire Merchants, Brooklyn NY and Terlato Wines International, Lake Bluff IL



**Bollinger NV Special Cuvée Brut (\$65) 92** This delicious cuvée shows multifaceted aromas of brioche, pear and hazelnut that are reflected on the palate. It's rich and autolytic with a lush, textured mouth feel. Made from 60%

Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay and 15% Meunier with the reserve wines (about 10% of the total) bottled in magnum with natural cork. **Bollinger NV Brut Rosé (\$100) 95** The exquisite NV Brut Rosé exhibits a medium salmon hue with a rich mousse and complex nose showing dried spicy red raspberry fruit and yeast notes. It is full-bodied and lively on the palate with great depth of flavor and elegance. It is beautifully balanced and has a long and flavorful finish. A superb Brut Rosé! **Bollinger 2002 La Grande Année Brut Champagne (\$150) 94** This prestige cuvée is made with a blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. It is rich and complex with lovely red fruit flavors that are complemented by light brioche, hazelnut, and mineral undertones. It is crisp on the attack, elegant on the palate and has a persistent finish. The fruit is estate grown, fermented in oak barrels, and spends 5 years on the lees.

**Franck Bonville NV Blanc de Blancs (\$33) 90** This lovely Blanc de Blanc has a very floral nose with a fresh and crisp attack and a broad, medium weight palate showing an abundance of Chardonnay fruit. The finish is round, precise with mineral and chalky notes. Good value.

**Cedric Bouchard Roses de Jeanne NV Blanc de Noir (\$55) 91** This a wine showing a floral perfume reminiscent of rose petals and a fine and fresh palate of red fruit that reflects the Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier base wines. It finishes long and clean with a scintillating finish. Cedric Bouchard makes the Roses de Jeanne Champagnes from his own, low-yielding vineyards in Celles-sur-Ource with the fruit crushed by foot and made with no dosage. A young rising star in the Aube. Importer: Potomac Selections, Landover MD

**Roland Champion** This small grower is located in the Grand Cru Village of Chouilly, in the Côte des Blancs. Founded in 1951 by André Champion, his son Roland expanded the company by purchasing some new land, and gave his name to the family house of Champagne. François, the current enologist and manager of the company, is the third generation of the family and continues in his father's footsteps. He farms their 18 hectares (44.5 acres) vineyard in Chouilly. **Importer:** Kysela Pere et Fils, Winchester, VA



**Roland Champion NV Cuvée d'Aramis Brut (\$50) 89** This is a soft, lush Champagne offering clean, fresh aromas and flavors of melon, orchard fruit and dried cherries. The palate is bright and fresh with a chalky note on the finish. Blend of 70% Pinot Meunier, 20% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay. **Roland Champion NV Blanc de Blancs**

**Grand Cru Chouilly 92** This 100% Chardonnay cuvée shows yeast, light citrus, apple and toast on the nose. It has a rich, silky palate that fills the mouth and offers subtly flavored fruit and rich autolytic notes, finishing dry. **Roland Champion 2004 Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$66) 92** Made from Chouilly Grand Cru fruit, this is an absolutely beautiful wine. Medium dark gold color, it shows roasted nuts and bits of butterscotch and stone fruit on the nose. It's full of rich, ripe, yeast-like flavors on a lush, creamy palate. Very appealing. **Roland Champion 2007 Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$ 80 ) 93** Not quite up to the standards of the 2004 vintage, yet this Champagne also shows lots of complexity, refinement and lush richness. Honeysuckle, minerals and earth show on the nose, while the palate offers an integrated profile of flowers, nuts, and dried fruit along with crisp acidity. **Roland Champion 2007 Champagne Special Club (\$80) 92+** The 2007 Special Club spends 6 years on the lees and has a dosage of 6 g/l. It offers light melon and pear fruit with brioche-like notes on an impeccably balanced palate, finishing with a mineral accent. **Roland Champion NV Rosé Brut Champagne (\$58) 91** Salmon copper in color, this is a delicate Champagne that reveals tangerine and kirsch scents and a juicy palate of blood orange and dried red fruit. The palate is creamy with good depth and balance, finishing with bright acidity.

**Chartogne-Taillet** This family run winery owns 11.5 ha in the village of Marfy with its clay, sand and sandstone over chalk in Montagne de Reims planted to the classic Champagne varieties. Alexander Chartogne, now in charge of the cellar, previously worked with Anselm Seloisse in Avize. He uses concrete eggs as well as neutral oak for some fermentation and has recently decrease dosage levels in response to riper fruit. The Champagnes are rich and fully flavored in a style we like. **Importer:** Terry These Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY



**Chartogne-Taillet NV Cuvée St. Anne (\$44) 91** A blend of 39% Chardonnay, 47% Pinot Noir, and 14% Pinot Meunier with 72% of the wine coming from the 2008 base. This is a delicious wine for the price, showing aromas and flavors of toasted hazelnut, tangerine marmalade, walnuts and butter toast. Spends 3 years on the lees and has a dosage of 4 g/l. **Chartogne-Taillet 2006 Millésime Brut (\$65) 93** Produced from 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay with 5 years en tirage, this lovely bottling reveals scents of fine flan caramel and orange zest on the nose. Full bodied with find dense extract in the mouth with concentrated orange citrus flavors on a complex palate. A huge, richly flavored wine. **Chartogne-Taillet 2004 Brut Millésime (\$65) 93** This lovely Champagne is a blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. It is medium-yellow in color with a rich yeasty mousse and notes of macadamia nut. It has a crisp and flavorful attack with a refined mouth feel, outstanding balance and a persistent finish. Disgorged late 2011. **Chartogne-Taillet 2006 Cuvée Fiacre Brut (\$75) 93** This delicate and refined bottling of 60%

Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir displays orange flowers and a hint of lime aromas. The delicate theme continues in the mouth where dense, fine flavors mirror the nose with exceptional balance and rich extract on the finish. Spends 5 years en tirage and has a dosage of 5.5 g/l. **Chartogne-Taillet 2007 Blanc de Blancs Cuvée Heurte Bise Extra-Brut (\$66) 92** With pronounced oxidized notes on the nose reminiscent of Scotch whiskey aged in a sherry barrel, this all Chardonnay Cuvée is also rich and assertively flavored, finishing with a nutty, bitter orange marmalade note. Spends 4 years on the lees and has a dosage of 2 g/l. **Chartogne-Taillet 2007 Cuvée Orizeaux Extra-Brut (\$86) 93** The medium gold straw Cuvée Orizeaux presents an effusive, rich nose of crème caramel with notes of orange zest and sherry. While also assertively flavored, it's very rich and creamy with toast, orange marmalade, and oxidized notes. Made of 100% Pinot Noir, it spends 4 years on the lees and has a dosage of 2 g/l. **Chartogne-Taillet 2007 Cuvée Les Barres Extra-Brut (\$101) 93** An unusual 100% Pinot Muenier Champagne, the Cuvée Les Barres shows a delicately fragrant nose and a very full, generous and lush mouth feel with savory flavors and a creamy texture. Superbly balanced. 4 years en tirage and a dosage of 4 g/l. **Chartogne-Taillet NV Brut Rosé (\$54) 91** Made from all 2008 fruit, the medium light salmon Brut Rosé is pretty and fruity, revealing cherry and red berry on the nose. The effervescent palate is fresh and creamy, showing more red fruit and apple than berry. Very well balanced and with a lovely long, light finish. A blend of 60% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir, and 15% Pinot Meunier aged 3 years on the lees and with 6 g/l dosage.

**Collard-Picard NV Cuvée de Merveilles 90** This is a full-bodied flavorful rosé de saignée with a bright red hue, ripe red berry fruit and a rich creamy mouth feel. Blended primarily of Chardonnay with small amounts of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, it is fermented in large format barrels called foudres de chêne and sees no malolactic fermentation. This family firm sources grapes from the Marne Valley and the Côte des Blancs and use traditional viticulture and fermentation, including aging wines in large oak foudres.

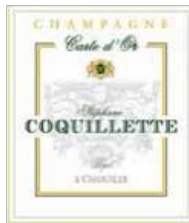
**Gaston Chiquet** While the Chiquet family has grown grapes in Champagne since 1746, it wasn't until 1935 that it began making wine. Today, Nicolas Chiquet farms 23 ha in the Vallée de la Marne in the villages of Aÿ, Dizy, Hautvillers and Mareuil-sur-Aÿ. All the fruit is from grand cru and premier cru vineyards with dense planting up to 10 thousand vines/ha. He uses no oak in fermentation or aging. The Champagnes are very flavorful and accessible with considerable elegance. **Importer:** Terry These Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**Gaston Chiquet NV Carte Verte Tradition Brut 1er Cru Champagne (\$48) 91** (Disgorged December 2011) This is a classic blend of 45% Pinot Meunier, 35% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot

Noir, aged on the lees for 3 years and with a dosage of 8.8 g/l. It has a light golden straw hue and a fragrant nose of lemon and orange citrus with a touch of verbena. The palate is dry and exuberant with notes of white stone fruit, finishing with lingering clean mineral extract. **Gaston Chiquet NV Blanc de Blancs Brut d'Aÿ Champagne (\$55) 91** Sourced entirely from Grand Cru vineyards planted by Nicolas' grandfather around the village of Aÿ. The Blanc de Blancs has a clean, fruity nose of mostly orchard fruit and a clean, lively, refined palate showing citrus and a note of chalky minerals. Spends 3 years en tirage, and has a dosage of 8.8 g/l. **Gaston Chiquet 2004 Réserve Blanc de Blancs Brut d'Aÿ (\$153/Magnum) 93** The Réserve Blanc de Blancs is aged on the lees an average of 8 years. Sourced from Aÿ vineyards, it shows a light straw hue and a delicate bouquet of minerals, citrus flowers, and beeswax. It's a dry, full and rich wine with an elegant mousse, somewhat shy on the palate, and finishing with refined mineral and citrus notes. 8 g/l dosage. **Gaston Chiquet 2004 Cuvée Brut Millésime Champagne (\$65) 92** A blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay aged 6 years on the lees. The 2004 Brut reveals precise aromas of yellow flowers, wax, and orchard fruit. The palate is broad and creamy with additional notes of almonds and yellow melon, finishing with lingering minerals. **Gaston Chiquet NV Rosé Champagne (\$54) 90+** (Disgorged February 2012) A blend of 40% Pinot Meunier, 30% Pinot Noir, and 30% Chardonnay that spends 3 years on the lees and has a dosage of 9.2 g/l. On the nose, it shows light red cherry and strawberry, which are mirrored on a very dry and smooth palate. **Gaston Chiquet 2005 Special Club Champagne 92+** The Special Club shows a lively bouquet of fresh breath and beeswax with red plum and green mango notes. Precisely balanced, the palate is also richly flavored and creamy. Luxurious and extroverted in character.

**Stephane Coquillette** A 4th generation winemaker, Stephane Coquillette is located in Grand Cru village of Chouilly in the Côte des Blancs. His vineyards are planted on thin soil directly over chalk tens of meters deep. The vineyards are worked in part by plough and then the ground is covered with bark in order to stop erosion and prevent weeds from sprouting. Herbicides are avoided at all costs. Everything is done by hand, such as trellising and pruning. The attention to detail in the vineyard is revealed in the very high quality of the Champagnes. **Importer:** Martine's Wines, Novato CA



**Stephane Coquillette NV Blanc de Blancs Cuvée Diane Brut (\$65) 93** This Blanc de Blanc Cuvée Diane is rich and complex, offering hints of ripe apple, dried pineapple, caramel, and hazelnut on a full-bodied frame. It's especially creamy with pleasing autolytic notes on a very persistent finish. **Stephane Coquillette NV**

**Cuvée Les Cles Blanc de Noirs Brut (\$53) 91** The Blanc de Noirs is extravagantly fragrant of biscuit, lees and dried tropical fruit. The palate shows ripe fruit, toasty lees and

a hint of grilled nuts, finishing with a distinctly sweet note on the finish. **Stephane Coquillette NV Carte d'Or 1er Cru Brut Chouilly (\$50) 92** About 2/3 Pinot Noir and 1/3 Chardonnay, the ripe citrus and mellow barrel notes of the nose offer a graceful introduction to a beautifully crafted palate that combines fresh fruit with toast and bread dough and just a hint of herbs. It finishes strong with flavorful extract. **Stephane Coquillette NV Marie Aimer Rosé Brut (\$70) 92+** A delightful blend of delicious, fresh red fruit and savory notes, just the thing for rosé lovers. The Marie Aimer Rosé shows a frothy, strawberry mousse nose and a very creamy, elegant palate with an abundance of red cherry fruit with light earth notes, very dry and superbly balanced. It fills the mouth and finishes long with persistent ripe red cherry and berry flavors.

**Deutz** Located in Aÿ, Deutz was founded in 1838 by two Prussian immigrants, William Deutz and Pierre-Hubert Gelderman. It was managed as a family business until 1993 when Champagne Louis Roederer purchased a major interest in the company. The Deutz house style is characterized by delicacy, freshness and liveliness. The base wines usually go through malolactic fermentation. **Importer:** Angels' Wine Imports, New York, NY



**Deutz 2007 Blanc de Blancs (\$74) 91** This Blanc de Blancs offers fresh and bold aromas of yellow flowers, biscuits, and a light toast note. Bright on the attack, it is full-bodied with a creamy mouth

feel and autolytic flavors. It is very nicely balanced and rich without being over ripe. **Deutz 2006 Brut (\$56) 92+ Medium yellow gold.** The 2006 Brut is rich with aromas of fresh brioche, dry honeycomb, and hints of dried yellow fruit and hazelnut. Fresh, bright and sparkling on the attack, it is richly flavored on the palate with dried fruit, and minerals, finishing super long and flavorful. Superbly balanced with a very long, fresh finish. **Deutz 2005 Amour de Deutz Brut (\$165) 93** (Disgorged Oct 2011). This delicious Champagne has nutty, perfumed aromas with notes of tropical fruit on the nose. It is bright on the attack with a fresh-tasting flavor, quite subtle with lemon citrus and autolytic notes. It shows huge depth and layering of flavors with a long toasty finish. **Deutz 1999 Cuvée William Deutz Brut Millésime (\$124) 93** The Cuvée William Deutz is the house prestige cuvée. It has a golden hue and is freshly baked bread, dried stone fruit and lees on the nose. It is bright and crisp on the attack with a lively palate showing high acidity, a silky character, and refined autolytic notes. An elegant, complex, and refined Champagne with a fine focus, lovely depth of flavor and a long finish. **Deutz NV Rosé (\$55) 91** This lovely Rosé shows fresh strawberry field fruit on the nose with a cherry note. It is lush and delicate on the palate with frothy red berry and cherry flavors. It is very nicely balanced and fresh, quite fruity--not subtle, but fresh, crisp and finishing long. Made from Pinot Noir from grand cru and premier cru villages

**Diebolt-Vallois** This family's wine history begins in the 15th century in Cuis. Today, Arnaud Diebolt and Nadia Vallois make wine in the Grand Cru village of Cramant in the Côte des Blancs, but the fruit comes mostly from the family's 11 ha vineyards from the Grand Cru villages of Cramant and Cuis. The Champagnes are especially rich and flavorful. **Importer:** Martine's Wines, Inc. Novato, CA



**Diebolt-Vallois NV Blanc de Blancs (\$56) 91** The Blanc des Blancs has a richly aromatic nose of ripe melon with lightly toasted almond and brioche notes. It's lush and mouth filling with ripe pear, melon, and a light nuttiness showing on a fleshy, bal-

anced palate. **Diebolt-Vallois NV Blanc de Blancs "Cuvée Prestige" (\$70) 93** An exquisite, complex Blanc des Blancs showing lemon tart and butter pastry aromas and clean, bright flavors of citrus, biscuit, and minerals on an elegant, focused palate, finishing long and with considerable finesse. Made entirely from vines in Cramant; reserve wines are aged in 40 hl casks. **Diebolt-Vallois NV Rosé (\$60) 90** Deep salmon in color with a rich, red fruit nose, this NV Rosé offers a straightforward attack and flavors of blood orange and red berry fruit on a full bodied palate. It's a blend of 63% Pinot Noir, 27% Chardonnay, and 10% Pinot Meunier mainly from the Les Toulettes vineyards in Epernay with the addition of Grand Cru Bouzy Rouge.

**Pascal Doquet** Doquet's 15.6 ha of vineyards in Côte des Blancs, Epernay and Perthois are organically farmed with an average age of 29 years. Excepting a small plot of Pinot Noir in Vertus, all vines are Chardonnay. Wines are fermented in both tank and cask. The domaine style is one of clean flavors and elegance. **Importer:** Robert Kacher Selections, New York NY



**Pascal Doquet NV Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$52) 90+** Made from 28 year old vines in Perthois near Vitry le Francois with a dosage of 7 g/l. This Blanc de Blancs shows light yeast, fresh bread and lemon zest on a focused and clean nose and palate. The wine is fruity, crisp and fresh. Aged in used oak for 6 months. **Pascal Doquet 1999**

**Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Le Mesnil sur Oger (\$85) 93** Aromatically delicate with flint, chalky minerals and light toast on a refined bouquet. Flavors run to the ripe and complex on a layered, balanced palate showing light autolytic notes married to citrus and melon and finishing with incredible length. Dosage of 7 g/l. **Pascal Doquet 2002 Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Le Mesnil sur Oger (\$106) 94** This Grand Cru Champagne offers a floral and mineral nose and a soft, creamy palate layered with rich flavors and mineral notes, finishing long and clean. It's 1/3 fermented in barrel and has a dosage of 4.5 g/l. **Pascal Doquet 2000 Le Mont Aimé Blanc de Blancs**

**Cru (\$70) 93** A nose of brioche and toasted hazelnut and almonds gives way to a rich, silky feel in the mouth. This Champagne is dry, almost ethereal and superbly focused with great length. Le Mont Aimé is located in the commune of Coligny in the southern Côte des Blancs. The wine spends 3 years on the lees. **Pascal Doquet Côtes de Blancs Rosé Ter Cru (\$66) 93** The Premier Cru Rosé displays a deep salmon color with aromas of dried cherry, toast and hints of coffee. It has a rich mousse, dense and penetrating flavors and a lively palate. A delicious rosé of 2/3 Pinot Noir and 1/3 Chardonnay from the southern Côte des Blancs with 7 g/l dosage.

**Duc de Romet NV Prestige Brut (\$32) 90** The Duc de Romet is made by Jean-Baptiste Geoffroy from purchased grapes in Vandières; a local co-op makes the wine, but Geoffroy does the final blend. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**Duc de Romet NV Prestige Brut (\$32) 90** The Prestige Brut is a blend of 75% Pinot Meunier and 25% Pinot Noir, spending 30 months en tirage with a dosage of 8 g/l. Yeast and orchard fruit shown on the nose. The attack is

spritzly, fresh, and flavorful, giving way to a creamy palate that's quite delicious and finishes with moderate length. Good value. **Duc de Romet 2004 Millésime Extra Brut (\$127) 94** The Extra Brut is a blend of 71% Pinot Noir and 29% Chardonnay and is dosed with 2 g/l. Aged in oak with 8 years en tirage, it reveals considerable oak on the nose and has a lovely creamy texture with coconut and smoke flavors. It is an elegant Champagne that is both unusual and delicious. **Duc de Romet NV Blanc de Rosé (\$115) 91** A blend of 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Chardonnay, this rosé is cold fermented with 16 months en tirage and only 2 g/l dosage. It is very fresh, fine and elegant and very dry with dried cherries on the nose and palate.

**Duval-Leroy** Champagne Duval-Leroy was founded in 1859 in Vertus. Today, it is managed by Carole Duval-Leroy, and it has over 200 hectares of vineyards scattered throughout the Côte des Blancs and the Montagne de Reim. It produces over 5 million bottles of Champagne annually. The Champagnes are easy drinking and fairly priced. **Importer:** International Cellars Vienna, VA



**Duval-Leroy NV Brut Champagne (\$29) 90** This Champagne is a blend of 75% Chardonnay and 25% Pinot Noir. It is very bright on the nose with a fresh aromatic lemony mousse. It is fruit forward and crisp on the palate with good

acidity, ripe flavors, and a long dry finish. Easy drinking and delicious. **Duval-Leroy NV Brut Rosé Sec Champagne (\$40) 88** Light salmon colored, this blend of Chardonnay

and Pinot Noir is highly aromatic with dried and slightly oxidized red berry fruit with a touch of caramel sweetness and oriental spice on a somewhat rustic finish. **Duval-Leroy NV Rosé Prestige (\$65) 90+** The Rose Prestige NV exhibits a light pink orange hue and a rich mousse. It has layered flavors of dried red fruit with yeasty notes. It has full mouth feel but rather low acidity and liveliness.

**Egly-Ouriet NV Brut "Tradition" Grand Cru (\$89) 93** (Disgorged January 2012) A blend of three Grand Crus-Bouzy, Ambonnay, and Verzenay. Vivid yellow gold. Prominent red cherry and cherry flowers on the nose. Pure, focused spicy red berry fruit and secondary notes show on a very creamy and complex palate. Persistent finish. Spent 36 months on its lees prior to being disgorged. **Importer:** Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY and Dionysos Imports, Manassas, VA

**Nicolas Feuillatte** Nicolas Feuillatte was launched in 1976 and is today one of Champagne's largest producers. Its grapes are sourced from 2500 ha of Grand Cru and Premier Cru vineyards throughout Champagne. The Cuvée Palmes d'Or is this estate's luxury cuvée. Until recently, winemaking at this estate was under the direction of the talented and affable Jean Pierre Vincent with whom we shared some wonderful moments drinking Champagne together. **Importer:** Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Woodinville WA.



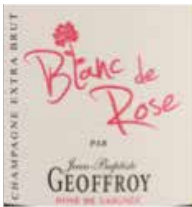
**Nicolas Feuillatte Brut NV (\$36) 88**

A blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Pinot Meunier and 20% Chardonnay, this NV Brut exhibits a deep yellow color and aromas of fresh melon and citrus. It has ripe fruit on the palate, medium weight and a crisp dry

finish. **Nicolas Feuillatte Rosé NV (\$48) 87** This Rosé is a blend of 60% Pinot Meunier, 30% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay. Deep salmon in color, it offers aromas of crushed red berry fruit of moderate intensity. It is spicy and flavorful on the palate. **Nicolas Feuillatte 2004 Vintage Brut (\$46) 91** The 2004 Vintage Brut exhibits aromas of yeast and yellow fruit. It is soft on the palate with a refined and complex creamy texture. It has crisp acidity with minerals and bold fruit flavors and lots of toasted oak. It's a nicely balanced Champagne with layers of flavors and a long, persistent finish. **Nicolas Feuillatte 1999 Cuvée Palmes d'Or (\$135) 94** A blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, the Cuvée Palmes d'Or displays a medium yellow gold hue with a lovely rich mousse, delicate yeasty nose and a palate of orchard fruit. It is very focused with layers of flavor and elegance, superb balance, and great finesse on the finish. **Nicolas Feuillatte 2003 Cuvée 225 (\$90) 91+** The Cuvée 225 is a blend of 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Chardonnay. After 9 years it is aging. It is beginning to show some age although it retains a pleasant creamy texture and reveals light flavors of orchard fruit and hazelnuts. There are hints of secondary and light autolytic notes. **Nicolas Feuillatte 2000 Cuvée Speciale (\$75) 91** The 2000 Cuvée Speciale exhibits aromas of light apple,

grilled nuts, and toast. These aromas are mirrored on the palate, which has assertive flavors, a soft texture and a rich mouth feel. The Champagne is beautifully balanced and has a long finish. **Nicolas Feuillatte 2004 Palm D' Or Rose. (\$200) 90** Dark pink. This rosé of 100% Pinot Noir has a fruit forward nose of red berries with hints of smoky oak. It is soft and round on the palate showing advanced secondary notes and light fruit flavors. Appears to be aging fast.

**Rene Geoffroy** The Geoffroy family has 11 of its 14 hectares planted in the village of Cumieres, where they have grown grapes since the 1600s. Today, Jean-Baptiste makes the wines, paying meticulous attention to every step of the process. He uses a traditional Coquard press, which was in use during our harvest visit. These wines were tasted at the domaine with Jean-Baptiste. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**René Geoffroy Blanc de Rosé (\$115) 92** (Disgorged June 2012.) This wine from the 2010 vintage is made with co-fermented Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, a 50/50 blend. Red berry, blood orange and red grapefruit all put in an appearance on a lively bouquet and again on the silky, fresh and focused palate, which exudes fruit without any sweetness. A great wine for sushi. An extra brut with just 2 g/l dosage. **René Geoffroy NV Rosé de Saignée Brut (\$70) 91** This 100% Pinot Noir is from the 2009 vintage and spends 2 years on the lees. Medium red pink in color, pure red pomegranate and red berries show on the nose. The palate is full and sappy with bold flavors. The dosage is 10 g/l. This wine would show best with food. **René Geoffroy NV Brut Cuvée Expression Champagne (\$50) 92** (Disgorged April 2012.) The Cuvée Expression is mostly (46%) Meunier from the Vallée de la Marne with 14% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir aged for two years and having a dosage of 9 g/l. The bouquet reveals a very delicate fruit and floral character with hints of flowers and nuts. It has a clean, crisp and pure mouth feel with a strong mineral component and a light note of fresh baguette. It's a 70/30 blend of the 2009 and 2008 vintages. **René Geoffroy 2006 Empreinte Brut Champagne 92** (Disgorged October 2011.) The Brut Empreinte has a rich, complex nose with hints of vanilla and dry sherry and offers textural finesse on a full-bodied palate with notes of cherry fruit, lightly toasted oak, and brioche, finishing with a firm focus. A blend of 76% Pinot Noir, 14% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Meunier mostly fermented in foudre, about half malo, with 5 years on the lees and 4 g/l dosage. **René Geoffroy 2004 Millésime Extra Brut (\$127) 94** This Extra Brut has an exotic nose of light honeyed oak, dried mushroom and a touch of palo cortado. The mellow and silky palate has a spicy quality with notes of honeycomb, vanilla, nuts, and lingering minerals. Made from the oldest vines of the Cumiere vineyard and fermented in barrel, this blend of 71% Pinot Noir and 29% Chardonnay spends 8 years on the lees and has a

dosage of 2 g/l. **René Geoffroy 2006 Volupté Brut (\$84) 93** (Disgorged January 2012.) The Volupté has a refined appearance of very fine bubbles and incisive aromas of white fruit and buttery Chardonnay. The beautifully delineated palate shows rich flavors of fresh butter cream and fresh almond, finishing with superb clarity. A blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir that sees not oak and has a dosage of just 2 g/l.

**Pierre Gimonnet et Fils** All of Gimonnet's cuvées are made of Chardonnay. He sources his Chardonnay fruit from three Grand Cru and two 1er Cru vineyards. Gimonnet's wines tend to be very dry and mineral like with refined flavor and mouth feel. These wines were tasted with Didier Gimonnet at the domaine and in New York at Terry Theise's annual tasting. Only those wines with prices are imported to the US. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**Pierre Gimonnet et Fils NV Selection Belles Années (\$44) 91** This blend of several vineyards spends 30 months on the lees. It offers light, floral aromas and a nicely balanced, creamy palate of bright citrus and apple flavors. Clean, fresh, and pleasant drinking. **Pierre Gimonnet et Fils NV Brut Blanc de Blancs Cuvée Cuis 1er Cru (\$51) 92** (Disgorged December 2011.) Didier Gimonnet's Brut Blanc de Blancs has a bouquet of fresh yellow fruit aromas and a ripe fruity palate. The blend is mostly (79%) from 2009 and includes three other reserve wines from bottle. It shows a clean, fresh nose of lemon zest and minerals and a balanced, very creamy palate. The wines go through full malolactic fermentation as the village of Cuis produces the most acidic wines of the Côte des Blancs. Aged on the lees 30 months with 8g/l sugar. **Pierre Gimonnet et Fils NV Rosé de Blancs 1er Cru Brut 92** The pale salmon pink Rosé de Blancs is a new cuvée for Gimonnet. It includes 12% Grand Cru Pinot Noir from Bouzy along with 33% Grand Cru Chouilly, 21% Grand Cru Cramant, and 9% Grand Cru Oger. The Champagne is extravagantly perfumed with strawberry, raspberry and rose petals, which are mirrored on a creamy palate that is very dry on the finish. **Pierre Gimonnet et Fils 2008 Cuvée Gastronomique Brut 1er Cru (\$61) 93** The Cuvée Gastro is made from a mix of 1er and Grand Cru villages with the single largest amount (43%) from Chouilly and the second largest from Cuis (29%), which contributes structure to the wine. This Champagne offers rich, creamy yeast and perfumed pear fruit with notes of fresh dough. It's full and round on the attack with a fine, focused palate that is beautifully flavored and shows great balance. Spends 3 years en triage and has a dosage of 7 g/l. **Pierre Gimonnet et Fils 2005 Cuvée Oenophile Maxi Brut Blanc de Blancs (\$72) 92** Oenophile is a blend of the best vintage cuvees that are maturing on lees in the cellar, and it's bottled with little or no dosage. The 2005 vintage spent 6 years on the lees and has just 1 g/l sugar. The wine is rich and elegant with a lovely, autolytic and mineral nose

and an intricate, creamy palate with chalky minerals on the finish. Gimmonet also makes another vintage blend of the best parcels called Fleuron, which receives a 5g dosage. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 2006 Fleuron Brut Blanc de Blancs (\$72) 93** Like the Oenophile, the Fleuron is a blend of the best parcels of the domaine. It is aged 5 year on the lees but then give a 5g dosage. The 2006 vintage Fleuron has a clean, pure chalky nose and a bright palate of assertive flavors showing excellent depth of fruit as well as autolytic notes. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 2004 Paradoxe Brut 92+** The 2004 Paradoxe Brut displays a medium yellow hue and fragrant aromas of ripe melon and fresh bread. It is rich and creamy on the palate with ripe fruit flavors and a long finish. It is composed of 60% Pinot Noir from Aÿ and Mareuil and 40 % of Chardonnay from Chouilly. A superb Champagne. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 2004 Vintage Collection (magnum) (\$209) 95** This magnum of the 2004 vintage is, like the Special Club, made only from old vines, predominantly from the Cramant Grand Cru, spending 6½ years on the lees and having a dosage of 5g/l. It has a very fine floral and citrus bouquet and a rich, refined palate that is perfectly balanced and integrated. An exceptional Champagne. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 2005 Special Club Grand Cru (\$85) 94** The Special Club is the best of each vintage, made from the best parcels of old (40-90 years old) vines, mostly from Cramant Grand Cru. This Champagne is especially fine with spicy, floral and orchard fruit aromas that carry over to the palate along with a white almond note, finishing very long with mineral purity. Spend 6 years on the lees, contributing to its creamy texture, and has 5 g/l sugar. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 2002 Special Club Grand Cru Champagne 95** This Special Club is an all Chardonnay blend exclusively from old vines, mostly from Cramant Grand Cru. This Special Club is extra special given the superb 2002 vintage. The wine shows minerals and flowers on the nose and a fine palate that is both elegant and full, finishing very long with chalky minerals. **Pierre Gimmonet et Fils 1996 Special Club Grand Cru 95** The 1996 vintage was also superb, and this Special Club has aged beautifully. It shows high toned oxidative notes on the nose, while the palate is exceptionally creamy and lush with almond and white stone fruit notes, very dense, finishing with thick extract.

**Gimmonet-Gonet** This domaine was created in 1986 when Philippe Gimmonet married Anne Gonet. They combined vineyards, creating a total of 13 hectares with an average age of 40 years. They do malolactic fermentation and use no barrels in fermentation or aging. The wines are unpretentious and easy drinking. **Importer:** Roche-mere, New York NY



**Gimmonet-Gonet NV Tradition Brut (\$45) 90** The Brut is a 50/50 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The Chardonnay was sourced from Grand Cru vineyards in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. It is fresh, crisp and easy drinking

with a rich mousse, light quince aromas, a creamy mouth feel, and a hint of sweetness on the finish. **Gimmonet-**

**Gonet 2007 Prestige Blanc de Blancs Milléme (\$60) 89**

This is a light and delicate champagne with a rich mousse and fruity palate. It is bright and mouth filling with a light creamy texture and notable sweetness on the finish

**Gonet-Médeville** This small grower estate was founded in 2000 by Xavier Gonet and Julie Médeville. Located in the village of Bisseuil in the Grande Vallée de la Marne, it consists of ten hectares of vines in grand cru and premier cru villages. Parcels of Pinot Noir (Bisseuil and Ambonnay) and Chardonnay (Mesnil-sur-Oger) are farmed organically, and each parcel is vinified separately. There is no malolactic fermentation and dosage is minimal. The wines show great focus and elegance. **Importer:** Martine's Wines, Novato, CA and Elite Wines, Lorton, VA



**Gonet-Médeville NV Brut Tradition 1er Cru (\$55) 91+** This is an elegant brut with incisive aromas and flavors of dried cherry and lemon citrus and flavors with a soft, creamy texture and a long, refined finish of superb clarity.

A blend of 70% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir and 5% Pinot Meunier, about 10 percent of which was fermented in old casks, and left on the lees 24 months with a dosage of 7 g/l. **Gonet-Médeville NV Blanc de Noirs Brut 1er Cru (\$60) 92** Very light eye of the partridge color. Rich and yeast on the nose with soft floral accents and a bright red raspberry note. Good overall finesse on the palate with dry red berries, bread dough, and chalky mineral notes. A 100% Pinot Noir from Bisseuil aged on the lees 24 months and with a dosage of 6 g/l. **Gonet-Médeville NV Rosé Extra Brut 1er Cru (\$69) 92** Medium salmon pink. Shows lively, precise aromas of strawberry and dried cherry with mineral accents. Beautifully balanced and flavorful with good depth and purity of red cherry and berry fruit on an elegant, rich and full palate. A blend of 70% Chardonnay, 27% Pinot Noir and 3% Ambonnay red wine, spending 36 months on the lees with a dosage of 7 g/l.

**Gosset** Founded in 1584, this is the oldest winery in Champagne. It was sold in 1994 to the Renaud-Cointreau group. Gosset sources all its fruit from premier and grand cru vineyards, uses only first pressings in its Champagnes, and does not let its wines go through malo. While the entry level Grande Réserve is good, the vintage Gosset Champagne we tasted was exceptionally good. **Importer:** Palm Bay International, Syosset, NY



**Gosset NV Grande Réserve Brut Champagne (\$68) 90** The Grande Réserve Brut is a blend of 43% Chardonnay, 42% Pinot Noir, and 15% Pinot Meunier all sourced from Grand Cru and Premier Cru vineyards. It is also a blend of three vintages and spends five years on the lees prior to release. The aromas are fragrant and rich in

red berry fruit. The mouth feel is full, and the palate is very flavorful, offering ripe fruit, vanilla, almonds and a touch of candied sweetness. **Gosset 2000 Grand Millésime Brut Champagne (\$100) 93** The Grand Millésime Brut 2000 is a blend of 57% Chardonnay and 43% Pinot Noir. Deep yellow in color, it has complex aromas of orchard fruit with autolytic notes on the nose. Aged for eight years on the lees, it is rich and creamy in the mouth revealing hints of figs and tropical fruit flavors and has a long and persistent finish. **Gosset NV Grand Rosé Champagne (\$86) 92** The Grand Rosé is a blend of 58% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir and 7% red wine. It is sourced from Grand and Premier Cru vineyards. The wine exhibits a beautiful salmon color with a frothy mouse and a lovely nose of dried cherries, brioche and yeast. It has complex red berry flavors, an elegant palate, and a long dry finish. Outstanding.

**Henri Goutorbe** Not only does this estate make great grower Champagne, it also runs the Hotel Castel Jeanson in Aÿ (where we stayed) and is also one of Champagne's most important vine nurseries. Goutorbe has 22 ha of vines, about half in Aÿ. The wines all undergo malo and are generous and ripe. These wines were tasted both at the winery in Aÿ and in New York City. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset NY.



**Henri Goutorbe NV Blanc de Blancs Brut 1er Cru Bisseuil Champagne (\$59) 91** In keeping with the character of other Goutorbe wines with rich fruit and a broad palate, this 100% Chardonnay is harmonious and easy drinking

with slightly sweet notes on the nose and finish. Aged 4 years on the lees with 9.6 g/l sugar. **Henri Goutorbe 2005 Cuvée Millésime Brut Grand Cru Champagne (\$64) 93** The sense of minerals is prominent in this wine, which also shows notes of lemon curd and lees on the nose and a precise melon and pear palate with a red berry accent. Aged 6 years on the lees, which explains why the 75% Pinot Noir from Aÿ isn't more prominent. Aize provides the 25% Chardonnay in this delicious, silky cuvee. **Henri Goutorbe NV Cuvée Prestige Brut Champagne (\$52) 91** This blend of 20% Chardonnay, 75% Pinot Noir, and 5% Menuier is freshly aromatic and ripe and full on the palate, showing red berry fruit with hints of toasted nuts and caramel flan. About 85% from 2006 base wines and 15% from 2004 and 2005 Réserve wines aged 4+ years on the lees with a dosage of 9g. **Henri Goutorbe 2004 Cuvée Millésime Special Club Grand Cru Aÿ Champagne (\$85) 92** Made from 25% Chardonnay and 75% Pinot Noir grown on Grand Cru Aÿ vineyards, this wine is redolent of minerals, citrus and red berries on the nose and is full with layered richness on the palate. Rich extract on the finish gives the appearance of sweetness, although the residual sugar is just 9 g/l. A strong note of chalky minerals runs throughout the wine. Spends 7 years on the lees. **Henri Goutorbe NV Brut Rosé Grand Cru (\$60) 92** This is a lovely Rosé Champagne with a full, lush palate that is sufficiently

rich with red berry fruit to pair with weighty dishes. Beautifully balanced. A blend of 35% Chardonnay, 51% Pinot Noir, and 14% Pinot Noir vin rouge, all from Aÿ, and aged on the lees 3 years.

**Marc Hébrart** With Jean-Paul Hébrart at the helm, the Hébrart family cultivates 14 hectares of vines on 65 different sites in 6 villages. Chardonnay represents about 75% of the vineyard and comes from Grand Crus sites in the Côte des Blancs, while Pinot Noir is the other 25% of the vineyard and comes from sites in the Vallée de la Marne. All his wines see full malo. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/ Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**Marc Hébrart NV Brut Selection (\$53) 91** (Disgorged May 2012). The Brut Selection is a nicely focused Champagne with an effusive nose of fruit and yeast with a bright red cherry accent. It

exhibits a hint of sweetness on a soft flavorful palate with a dry finish of moderate acidity. A blend of 65% old vine Pinot Noir and 35% Chardonnay that spends 36 months en tirage and has a dosage of 7 g/l. **Marc Hébrart 2006 Special Club Brut 92** The Special Club Brut exhibits a pale yellow hue and a fragrant nose of light berries and yeast. It is lively and youthful with a crisp attack, a lively elegant mouth feel, and a rich long finish. A blend of 55% old vine Pinot Noir and 45% old vine Chardonnay **Marc Hébrart NV Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$51) 92** This Blanc de Blancs reveals highly fragrant honeysuckle and lemon citrus on the nose. It's bright and fresh on the attack with orchard and mandarin orange fruit on a broad and flavorful palate, finishing with lingering spice extract. A 100% Chardonnay that spends 36 months en tirage and has a dosage of 8 g/l. **Marc Hébrart NV Cuvée de Réserve Brut (\$46) 91** The Cuvée de Réserve offers lively aromas of yellow waxy fruit, lemon peel, and red berries. It's spritzy on the attack with good flavor intensity and an uplifting cherry note on an energetic palate. A blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay that spends 26 months en tirage and has a dosage of 8.5 g/l. **Marc Hébrart 2006 Rive Gauche-Rive Droite Grand Cru Brut (\$139) 93** A spectacular Champagne with lively aromas of leesy almond paste and creamy lemon curd that carry over to the palate as super pure and richly intense flavors. Oak aging shows only in the creamy texture not in the flavor. Has a penetrating, sappy finish with a bright cherry note. A 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir that spends 5 years on the lees and is bottled with a 5 g/l dosage. **Marc Hébrart NV Rosé Brut (\$54) 91** Very expressive sweet red berries and blood orange show on the nose of this scintillating Rosé. The flavors are similarly striking with considerable depth and richness on a fine, creamy palate. A blend of 50% Chardonnay, 42% Pinot Noir and 8% Pinot Noir vin rouge aged 26 months en tirage with a dosage of 7.5 g/l.

**Charles Heidsieck NV Brut Réserve 91** The Brut Réserve is an impressively rich wine with a complex bouquet of yellow fruit and fresh bread. The palate has bracing acidity and bold flavors of fruit and buttery croissant on a creamy base, finishing with an impression of wet stones. Legendary cellar master Daniel Thibault resurrected the Brut Réserve after Charles Heidsieck was purchased by Rémy Martin Cognac in the 1980s; he has been ably followed by Régis Camus. **Importer:** Remy Cointreau, New York NY

**Heidsieck Monopole NV Blue Top Brut (\$30) 88+** A good entry level Champagne showing aromas and flavors of ripe apple, citrus, and yeast with a medium weight, slightly sweet palate. A blend of 70% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay, and 10% Meunier. Heidsieck Monopole is owned by the Vranken Company. **Importer:** Vranken Pommery America, New York, NY



**Piper-Heidsieck 2002 Cuvée Rare Brut (\$150) 93** One of Champagne's older wine houses, Piper Heidsieck has in recent years been bought by Rémy Cointreau and then sold again to a private

holding company of luxury brands. It owns no vineyards of its own and instead sources grapes from 60 different vineyards for its annually production of 5 million bottles. Its Cuvée Rare is an iconic Champagne showing ripe citrus, berries and biscuits on the nose and a creamy-textured palate that reflects the aromas, finishing dry and, for the bottle we tasted, a little tired. It's a blend of 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir. **Importer:** Remy Cointreau, New York, NY

**Henriot** Now managed by Stanislas Henriot, this is one of Champagne's older houses, founded in 1808. It is also one of the few independent, large family-owned houses. Stanislas' father Joseph played a key role in revitalizing and building the family business. The Henriot Cuvée des Enchanteleurs is one of the better Champagnes we've tasted. **Importer:** Henriot Inc., New York NY



**Henriot NV Blanc de Blancs (\$60) 92** The Blanc de Blancs NV offers a rich mousse and fragrant aromas of melon, citrus and toast. It has a lush, leesy mouth feel with mineral notes and crisp acidity on a nicely delineated palate and a long dry finish.

**Henriot 1998 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Brut (\$199) 93+** Made of a 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from several Grand Cru villages. This exceptional Champagne is refined and elegant with superb focus. Ripe fig, brioche, and yellow fruit show on the nose and are reflected on a rich, seamless and creamy palate of striking depth, ending with a penetrating finish. **Henriot NV Rosé Brut (\$70) 91** This is a light, delicate Rosé offering red berry fruit and citrus aromas. Made of

equal parts of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, it is refined and elegant on the palate with good intensity of flavor, a creamy texture and a long crisp finish.

**Hubert Paulet 2004 Brut 1er Cru Millésime 92** Medium yellow gold, this superb vintage Champagne shows rich, coaxing aromas and firm-edged flavors of butterscotch, peach, and minerals. The palate is beautifully textured and layered, finishing with impressive persistence. Olivier Paulet has been in charge of this tiny Champagne house since 1998 and works only with estate fruit from Rilly La Montagne. He puts an emphasis on sustainable, environmentally friendly viticulture. **Importer:** Pas Mal, Tenafly NJ

**Jacquesson NV Cuvée 735 Champagne (\$72) 92+** Aromas of melon and brioche with hints of herbs. Bright with good acidity and crispness on the palate. Creamy and lush mouth feel with ripe flavors and a persistent finish. **Importer:** Vintage '59 Imports Washington, D.C.

#### **Krug Grand Cuvée (\$150) 96**

Krug is one of the finest non-vintage luxury Champagnes. It was first crafted in the mid-19th century by the father and son winemaking team of Joseph and Paul Krug. The Grand Cuvée is a blend of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier. It has a unique style due to its use of 35-50% Réserve wines (derived from up to ten vintages) and its fermentation in small oak barriques. Medium dark gold in color, this magnificent Champagne reveals rich toasted oak, hazelnuts and brioche on the nose. The palate is rich, creamy and complex with a hint of lemon and finishes dry with very good length. **Importer:** Moët-Hennessy USA, New York, NY.

#### **Laherte Frères 2004 Brut Champagne (\$60) 91**

The Brut "Prestige" Millésime is pale yellow in color and reveals oxidative and smoky vanilla aromas on the nose with a touch of hazelnut. It is dry and crisp on the attack with complex flavors, a chalky palate and a long finish.

**Jean Lallement** This 4-hectare estate with parcels in Verzenay and Verzy is managed by Jean-Luc Lallement since his father retired in 1999. Trained in the local oenological school, Jean-Luc also makes the wine. The wines are fermented with indigenous yeasts in steel tanks and go through malolactic fermentation. The wines reveal considerable minerality and refinement with a strong sense of place. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



#### **Jean Lallement NV Brut (\$53) 91**

The entry-level Brut is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay with 20% reserve wines from 2008. It displays fragrant aromas with hints of toasted nuts on the nose. It has a rich and vibrant palate with red berry fruit flavors, minerals and persistence on the finish. **Jean Lallement NV Réserve Brut (\$67) 91+** The Réserve is also a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay. It offers

ripe plum with citrus notes on the nose and has a rich and lush palate. It is nicely focused and balanced with good extract and a long finish. **Jean Lallement NV Brut Rosé (\$68) 92** The Brut Rosé is 100% Pinot Noir with 9% vin rouge. It has a salmon color and aromas of dried rose petals and ripe red berry fruit on nose. Aged for 24 months on the lees, it is full-bodied and creamy on the palate with ripe red berry flavors and a chalky finish.

**Lamiable** Lamiable is a small grower family Champagne house established in 1960. It is located in the Grand Cru Champagne village of Tours-sur-Marne. Jean-Pierre Lamiable, a physician, and his daughter Oriane produce the wine. The family owns six hectares, of which 4.5 is devoted to Pinot Noir and 1.5 to Chardonnay. The vines are planted on limestone and chalk soils. The Champagnes are ripe and fresh-tasting. **Importer:** Robert Kacher Selections Washington, DC



**Lamiable NV Grand Cru Brut (\$55) 90** The Grand Cru Brut is made of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. Blended from the 2008 and 2009 vintages, and aged for 18 months on the lees, it reveals a palate of ripe tropical fruit on the front end

with notes of brioche and light toasted nuts on the palate. The dosage is 8g/l. **Lamiable NV Grand Cru Brut Rosé (\$62) 90** The Brut Rosé is the same blend as the white brut with a touch of red wine. It offers a pink hue, a fresh rich mousse and light aromas of cherry fruit. It has a delicate texture and light flavors on the palate with good balance and acidity. **Lamiable 2005 Grand Cru Blanc de Noirs "Les Meslaines" (\$70) 91** The Grand Cru Blanc de Noirs is a delicious 100% Pinot Noir Champagne from 50-60 year old vines. It offers fresh aromas and flavors of apple, black currant and almond. It has a rich creamy mouth feel with yeasty notes and crisp acidity on the finish.

**P.Lancelot-Royer Cuvée des Chevaliers Blanc de Blancs (\$50) 89** This Blanc de Blancs offers aromas of green apples, citrus and yeast on the nose followed by ripe and flavorful orchard fruit on the palate. It is medium weight and lively and the finish lingers on with high acidity. **Importer:** North Berkeley Wine Company, Berkeley California and Dionysus Imports, Manassas, VA

**Jean Laurent** This grower produces stunning hand crafted NV Champagnes from a 39-acre vineyard in the village of Celles-Sur Ource in the Aube, an outlying Champagne district south of the Marne. Jean Laurent's family has grown wine in the village for more than 1,000 years. His NV bruts are typically blended from three vintages and aged for a minimum of three years on the lees. **Importer:** Hand Picked Selections Warrenton, VA



**Jean Laurent NV Brut Blanc de Noirs (\$55) 90** This 100% Pinot Noir reveals yellow melon and dried red berry fruit aromas. It has a light and creamy palate with ripe fruit flavors, good acidity, and a long finish.

**Jean Laurent NV Blanc de Blancs (\$55) 91** Yellow gold. This 100% Chardonnay offers aromas of fresh citrus and green apple on the nose. It has a lush and creamy mouth feel with a lot of sweet fruit and a crisp long finish. **Jean Laurent 2000 Blanc de Noir (\$52) 91+** The 2000 Blanc de Noir has a lovely medium gold hue and aromas of dried cherry and yellow melon. It is rich and creamy on the palate with good stone fruit flavors and hints of yeast, nuts and dried orange peel. This is one of the better Blanc de Noir we have tasted for this report. **Jean Laurent NV Brut Rosé (\$60) 90** This fragrant rosé exhibits a dark salmon pink color and offers aromas of ripe red berries with hints of cinnamon. It has a rich mousse and a lush palate of ripe tasting red fruit, minerals and toast, with good flavor intensity and balance.

**Laurent-Perrier** The House of Laurent-Perrier was established in 1812 and is located in the heart of the Champagne region at Tours-sur-Marne. Owned by the Nonancourt family since 1939, it remains the largest independent "Grande Marque" Champagne House. Laurent-Perrier Champagnes are of outstanding quality and produced by a team under the direction of Michel Fauconnet, chef de cave. Their most noteworthy Champagnes include the Cuvée Brut and Grand Siècle. **Importer:** Laurent-Perrier U.S., Sausalito, CA



**Laurent-Perrier NV Ultra Brut (\$80) 92** The Ultra Brut is a blend of 55% Chardonnay and 45% Pinot Noir. It has a light yellow color and an aromatic nose of citrus and orchard fruit with hints of brioche and minerals. It is round and creamy on the palate with a very dry finish. Blended from fifteen crus with an average rating of 97%. Nicely done. **Laurent Perrier NV Brut Champagne (\$40) 90** This is a fruit forward delicious tasting Brut, a blend of 45% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir and 15% Pinot Meunier. It offers yellow fruit flavors, a rich and creamy palate and a light dose of sweetness on the finish. **Laurent-Perrier 2002 Brut Millésime (\$70) 93+** A blend of 50% Chardonnay – 50% Pinot Noir Pinot Noir, the 2002 Brut displays a yellow-gold color and light honeyed fruit aromas on the nose. It has a rich mousse, flavors of fresh stone fruit and a long finish. **Laurent-Perrier NV Cuvée Rosé Brut (\$100) 94** Deep salmon. This is a magnificent Rosé offering aromas of light red berry fruit and a crisp elegant attack and mouth feel of lingering dried red berry fruit and citrus. It is rich tasting and creamy on the palate and is perfectly balanced and rounded on the finish. **Laurent-Perrier NV Grand Siècle (\$150) 95+** The Grand Siècle is a blend of 50 % Chardonnay – 50 % Pinot Noir. The grapes for Grand Siècle are sourced from twelve of Champagne's finest Grand Cru vineyards, including Ambo-

nay, Avize, Cramant and Les Mesnil-sur-Oger. Rich and elegant on the nose, it displays yeast, minerals, melon and pear with toast. It is beautifully focused with a ripe full mouth feel. Delicious food wine. **Laurent-Perrier NV Demi Sec (\$45) 89** This demi-sec is a blend of 45% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, and 15% Pinot Meunier. Yellow gold in color, it reveals aromas of dried fruit, almonds and brioche. On the palate it is full-bodied and exhibits excellent sugar-acid balance, and is lively and easy drinking. The dosage is 40g/liter.

**Libert-Fils** This tiny four hectare estate produces outstanding Champagnes. Bertrand Libert and his father Georges produce their wines from 100% Chardonnay grown in their estate vineyard Grand Cru village of Cramant in the Côte des Blancs. The wines are fermented in stainless steel vats and undergo malolactic fermentation. Stylistically, they are fresh, clean and beautifully focused with flavors of citrus and orchard fruit. **Importer:** Vintage '59 Imports Washington, D.C.



**Libert-Fils NV Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$65) 90** Bright yellow. This Blanc de Blancs displays lovely citrus and leesy aromas on the nose. It is nicely focused with crisp acidity on the attack and clean flavors of orchard fruit on the palate. Lush, elegant and very

dry on the finish. **Libert-Fils 2005 Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$100) 93** The 2005 Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs is light yellow in color and has a highly aromatic nose of fresh flowers, citrus and a hint of minerals. It is crisp on the palate with good depth of flavor, very focused and balanced and has a long elegant finish.

**Champagne-Mailly Grand Cru** This Champagne House is a unique cooperative that sources all of its wines from 70 hectares of Grand Cru vineyards. The vineyards are owned by 25 grower families located in the heart of the Montagne de Reims. It produces a wide variety of Champagnes all well made and of excellent quality. Les Échansons, a Champagne only made in the best years, is the jewel in the crown of this cooperative. **Importer:** Saranty Imports, White Plains, NY



**Mailly NV Brut Réserve (\$35) 90** The Brut Réserve is this estate's flagship wine. A blend of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay, it has a clean fruity and crisp style with hints of flowers and minerals on the nose. Aged on the lees for 3 years, it is round and fruity on the palate, high in acidity and

dry on the finish. **Mailly NV Extra Brut The Special (\$39) 91** This Extra Brut is a blend of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay. It is a zero dosage wine with high levels of floral and fruit maturity. Aged for 5 years on the lees, it reveals ripe fruit flavors on the palate, minerals, and almonds and a crisp dry finish. **Mailly NV Lintemporelle**

**(\$80) 92** A prestige cuvée, composed of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, the Lintemporelle has a lovely yellow-gold color and rich aromas of melon, fresh berries, and a hint of minerals. It has a creamy and beautifully focused palate filled with light fruit flavors and hints of chalk and minerals. **Mailly NV Lintemporelle Rosé (\$80) 92**

The Lintemporelle Rosé is made of the same blend as the white Lintemporelle, with the addition of 3% of red wine. Pink in color, it offers aromas of raspberry and red berry fruit with hints of minerals and chalk. It is mouth filling and richly flavored on the palate with a dry fruity finish.

**Mailly NV Brut Rosé The Classical (\$50) 90** The Brut Rosé is made of 90% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay following the saignee method. Dark pink in color, it reveals dried cherry aromas with a rich and full palate, a touch of sweetness, minerality, and chalk. **Mailly NV Blanc de**

**Noirs The Special (\$45) 90** The Blanc de Noir is 100% Pinot Noir and displays a golden color and aromas of flowers, herbs and stone fruit. It is very lively in the glass with a rich and creamy mouth feel and a long dry finish.

**Mailly Brut Millésimé The Classical (\$50) 92** A blend of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay, the Brut Millésimé is a delicious vineyard selection from the 2006 vintage. It reveals delicate and refined citrus flavors with notes of brioche and minerals with a crisp long finish. **Mailly Les**

**Échansons (\$120) 93** This is an exceptional Champagne made only in the best vintage years. A blend of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay, it has refinement and depth on the nose and is rich and lush on the palate with ripe stone fruit flavors, citrus and spice. Aged for 9 years on the lees, it reveals a lovely texture and good length on the palate. **Mailly 2000 Exception Blanche (\$80) 91** This

Blancs de Blancs is sourced from vines outside the village of Mailly. Yellow gold in color it reveals very ripe lush melon like fruit and honey. It's a very unusual with great intensity of flavor. Crisp and dry on the finish with hints of minerality. **Mailly Délice (\$45) 90** The Délice is a demi-sec dessert wine made of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay with a dosage of 35g/litre. It is ripe on the palate with flavors of pear and peach along with hints of minerality and sweetness.

**A. Margaine** This is a small family-owned estate managed by Arnaud Margaine. Located in Villers-Marmery, it has 6.5 hectares in vines and follows sustainable viticulture practices, eschewing herbicides and increasing cover crops among the vines. Arnaud Margaine's winemaking involves the use of reserve wines, decreasing amounts of malolactic fermentation, and experimentation with barrels. **Importer:** Terry These Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**A. Margaine NV Cuvée Traditionelle Brut (\$47) 90** This NV Brut is a blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir with 51% of the blend made up of reserve wines. It is lightly fragrant and offers a fresh tart attack with flavors of citrus and orchard fruit, yeast and minerals on the palate. The finish is chalky, earthy and

pleasantly dry. **A. Margaine NV Brut Premier Cru Villers-Marmery (\$50) 90** (Disgorged 2/2012) The Brut Premier Cru is also a blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir. It offers fragrant aromas of citrus with notes of minerals and yeast. It is full on the palate and it is quite dry and crisp on the finish. **A. Margaine NV Rosé (\$57) 91+** The NV Rosé is a blend of 78% Chardonnay, 11% Pinot Noir and 11% Pinot Noir vin rouge. Fermented in stainless steel with 20% in oak, it is very fragrant and offers plum and red berry fruit flavors. It has a creamy palate, excellent balance and refinement, and a lovely finish. **A. Margaine NV Demi-Sec (\$50) 90** The NV Demi-Sec is a blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir and has a dosage of 32 g/liter. It is beautifully balanced and reveals aromas and flavors of stone fruit with hints of chalk and minerals on a tart finish. One of the better demi-secs we've tasted.

**Jean Milan** This is a small 6 ha domaine spread across 42 parcels in Oger in the middle of the Côte des Blancs between Mesnil and Cramant. Its Champagnes are 100% Chardonnay and are sourced entirely from Grand Cru Oger. The Champagnes are clean and bright with a creamy mousse and chalky minerals. Milan is among the finest producers of Oger. It recently changed its status from RM to NM in order to expand production. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



**Jean Milan NV Cuvée Speciale Brut (\$54) 90** This is Jean Milan's entry level Champagne, aged on the lees for 2 years, a blend of the 2008 and 2009 vintages, and with a 6 g/l dosage. It's a nicely polished Champagne that's light on its feet, with pear fruit and a creamy palate, finishing almost bone dry with a lingering minerality.

**Jean Milan NV Millenaire Brut (\$60) 90+** Also non-vintage, the Millenaire Brut is a blend of fruit from 2007 and 2008 and spends 3 years en tirage with an 8 g/l dosage. It has an aromatically subdued, chalky mineral and light pear fruited nose and a very creamy, frothy palate that again exudes minerals over fruit. It also finishes with a fine stony cut. **Jean Milan 2008 Symphorine Brut (\$68) 91** The Symphorine has an interesting, perfumed nose that's quite assertive with fine yeast and apple cider like notes. It's quite dry on the attack, again with yeast notes. On the palate, there good extract and purity and a very creamy texture. Spends 3 years on the lees and has 8 g/l dosage. **Jean Milan NV Cuvée de Réserve Brut (\$64) 92** The Cuvée de Réserve offers clean, rich aromas of ripe pear and freshly baked bread. It's bright and fresh on the attack and offers a rich, creamy texture on the palate with light orchard and citrus flavors. Finishes with lingering stony minerals. The wine is mostly from the 2007 vintage with some 2006 fruit, all from Oger, fermented in neutral oak, and with 4 years on the lees. The dosage is 8 g/l. **Jean Milan NV Rosé Glamour (\$65) 92** The Jean Milan Rosé reveals rich, sweet mineral-accented aromas of bright red fruit. It's dry in the mouth with flavors of dried and fresh red berries on

a frothy but refined palate. It's quite an elegant wine with lingering minerality on the finish, but it needs a little time to pull itself together. It's a blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% vin rouge from Pinot Noir, all from the 2009 vintage, and with a dosage of 10 g/l.

**Pierre Moncuit** Pierre Moncuit and his wife Odile Moncuit-Delos established the house of Pierre Moncuit. Since 1977 their daughter Nicole Moncuit has been in charge of viticulture and winemaking, while her brother Yves is responsible for sales. The family farms 15 hectares in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger along with another five hectares in the Sézanne. The estate is best known for its high quality Blanc des Blancs, produced without reserve wines. The wines are focused, flavorful and rich in chalkiness and minerality. **Importer:** Vintage '59 Imports Washington, D.C.



**Pierre Moncuit NV Hugues de Coulmet (\$52) 92** This entry-level brut offers abundant floral aromas with notes of minerals and light yeast. On the palate, it displays orchard fruit with crisp acidity and a persistent steely finish. **Pierre Moncuit NV Moncuit-Delos Grand Cru (\$58) 93** The Moncuit-Delos is a Grand Cru Blanc des

Blancs. It is a delicious wine offering mouthfilling flavors of orchard fruit, brioche, and yeast. It is beautifully structured with perfect balance, overall elegance and richness of flavor.

**Moussé Fils** Champagne Moussé sits in the village of Cuiseles in the Vallée de la Marne with schist subsoil under clay. About 80 percent of Moussé's vines are Pinot Meunier, which is reflected in the wines made by Cedric Moussé. He makes the only 100% Pinot Meunier Special Club. All his cuvées see full malo and are made from organically farmed vineyards. Moussé shows the potential of Pinot Meunier in the hands of a skilled Champagne maker. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY

**Moussé Fils NV Brut Or Tradition Blanc de Noirs (\$49) 89** This Brut is a blend of 80% Meunier and 20% Pinot Noir. It has a light lemon color and clean citrus aromas and flavors with touches of yeast. It is creamy on the attack and quite dry on the finish. **Moussé NV Noire Réserve Brut Champagne (\$54) 91** This predominantly (85%) Pinot Meunier cuvée spends 54 months on the lees. It shows ripe fruit, full in the mouth with good balance, and a lengthy, chalky finish. 8 g/l dosage. **Moussé 2007 Millésime Brut Champagne (\$62) 91+** Another mostly (90%) Pinot Meunier bottling, this vintage Champagne ages 54 months en tirage and has 8 g/l sugar. It's richly aromatic and flavored with excellent balance and a long finish. **Moussé 2006 Special Club Brut Champagne (\$84) 92** This 100 percent Pinot Meunier is an exceptional Champagne showing a refined orchard nose, a bright attack, and a delicious, focused palate showing integrated fruit, honeycomb and yeast notes, finishing long. **Moussé NV Rosé Tradition Brut**

**(\$53) 91** A blend of 92% Pinot Meunier and 8% Pinot Noir aged 30 months on the lees and with a dosage of 10 g/l, this is a bright, exuberant wine showing fresh red fruit. It's a tad sweet and fruit forward, but many consumers like rosés this way.

**Moët & Chandon** Located in Epernay, Moët & Chandon is one of the largest producers in Champagne with an annual production of over 30 million bottles. Established in 1743 by Claude Moët, Moët & Chandon is also one of the oldest Grandes Marques. It sources grapes from its own 15,000 ha wine estate and purchases grapes from growers throughout Champagne. It produces a wide variety of excellent wines that include its flagship NV Imperial Brut, Grand Vintage Collection, and ethereal Dom Pérignon prestige cuvée. **Importer:** Moët Hennessy U.S.A. New York, NY



**Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial NV Épernay (\$45) 90** The Brut Imperial is Moët & Chandon's flagship wine. A blend of Pinot Noir (45% to 50%), Pinot Meunier (35%-40%) and Chardonnay 10%-15%), it

exhibits fresh orchard fruit and toasted aromas on the nose with a lively rich mousse in the glass. It has rich, yeast flavors on the palate with good texture, volume and balance. At 13 g/l RS, it's made a bit sweeter for the American palate.

**Moët & Chandon NV Rosé Imperial Épernay (\$45) 90**

The medium-light salmon colored Rosé Imperial shows dried red berry aromas. Smooth and creamy on the palate, it combines 40-50% Pinot, 30-40% Pinot Meunier and 10-20% Chardonnay of which about 30% is reserve wine. It is highly accessible with a round texture, simple red berry and cinnamon spice flavors, and a long dry finish. RS 9 g/l.

**Moët & Chandon 2004 Grand Vintage Collection (\$55) 93**

The 2004 Grand Vintage exhibits floral aromas with fresh citrus, a hint of stonefruit and bread dough on the nose. It is rich and well balanced on the palate, with ripe fruit flavors, a velvet texture and a long finish. Superb with Ceviche de Saint Jacques [scallops].

**Moët & Chandon 2002 Grand Vintage Blanc Épernay (\$55) 92**

The 2002 Grand Vintage is a blend of 51% Chardonnay, 26% Pinot Noir, and 23% Pinot Meunier. Produced from an exceptional vintage and having spent seven years on the lees, it exhibits rich toasted aromas with hints of grilled fruit, vanilla, hazelnuts and mocha. On the palate it is rich and creamy with volume, complexity and balance.

**Moët & Chandon 2002 Grand Vintage Rosé Épernay (\$45) 91+**

Brilliant salmon in color, the 2002 Grand Vintage Rosé spends seven years on the lees. It is complex, showing red berry and dried cherry aromas with a slight herbal character along with oriental spices and licorice. It is refined, delicate, and creamy on the palate combining 51% Pinot Noir, 28% Chardonnay and 21% Pinot Meunier. While not as lively as the regular Grand Vintage, it has lovely flavors and richness on the finish.

**Moët & Chandon 1993 Grand Vintage Collection (\$55) 93**

The 1993 Grand Vintage offers hints of hazelnut and butterscotch on the nose that are also picked up on the palate with moderate acidity and

a light, nutty autolytic character. **Moët & Chandon 1992 Grand Vintage Collection Épernay (\$130) 94+** This yellow-gold 1992 Grand Vintage is a rich and powerful wine that offers a complex nose and flavors of brioche, crème brûlée, and candied stone fruit with prominent autolytic notes. It shows remarkable depth of flavor with a creamy mouth feel along with freshness and harmony from beginning to finish. A blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay, and 15% Pinot Meunier with RS of 7.5 g/l. This wine was first released ten years ago and is just now being rereleased. **Moët & Chandon NV Nectar Imperial Champagne (\$55) 88** This is an easy drinking Champagne made of 40-50% Pinot Noir, 30-40% Pinot Meunier and 10-20% Chardonnay. It has a creamy mousse and aromas of light fruit and toasted oak. With a dosage of 45g/litre it is mouth filling and sweet on the palate with ripe fruit and moderate acidity. **Moët & Chandon NV Nectar Impérial Rosé Champagne (\$60) 88+** The Imperial Rose is similar in composition to the Nectar Imperial but has 10% Pinot Noir red wine in the blend. Bright pink in color it is fruity and flavorful offering aromas and flavors of ripe cherries and strawberry compote with hints of toast and caramel.

**Moët & Chandon 2003 Dom Pérignon (\$125) 93+** Dom Pérignon is the most popular prestige cuvée produced in Champagne. Launched by Moët & Chandon in 1921, it is the quintessential luxury Champagne exhibiting impeccable blending, extraordinary balance, and overall finesse. The 2003 Dom Pérignon exhibits notable acidity and is rich and elegant on the palate with a creamy mousse and flavors of fresh orchard fruit and brioche with notes of minerality, iodine and smokiness. It is lively on the palate and full in the mouth with lingering elegance and refinement. **Moët & Chandon 2002 Dom Pérignon (\$125) 95** A blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in roughly equal proportions, the Dom Pérignon 2002 Vintage exhibits a very delicate nose of brioche, orchard fruit and a hint of lemon. On the palate it is rich and opulent with hints of stone fruit and a long satisfying finish that is elegant and refined.

**Bruno Paillard** Bruno Paillard started out as a broker in Reims in 1975. Today he owns one of Champagne's best houses and also presides over the Lanson Boizel Chanoine Champagne group that includes Lanson, Boizel, Besserat and Philipponnat. He owns 32 ha of organically farmed, mostly Grand Cru vineyards, which provide half his production needs. Bruno Paillard wines are unfailingly well-balanced and low in dosage, offering elegant wines that improve with time in the bottle after disgorgement. **Importer:** Vintus Wines, Pleasantville, NY



**Bruno Paillard NV Brut Première Cuvée (\$52) 91** A blend of 45% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay, and 22% Pinot Meunier from the first pressing only, this Champagne includes reserve wines dating back to 1985.

Medium yellow straw in color, it offers a rich floral nose with notes of white stone fruit and cherry. Bracing acidity

shows on the attack with a creamy, fresh and well-balanced palate that finishes with flint, chalk and red currant notes. **Bruno Paillard NV Brut Rosé Première Cuvée (\$80) 91** Predominantly (85%) Pinot Noir from the first pressing, this delicate pale salmon Champagne offers aromas of blood orange and bread dough and an assertively flavored palate of almond, red berries and orange zest, with a persistent, dry finish.

**Hubert Paulet 2004 Brut Millésime 1er Cru (\$34) 90** Medium yellow gold., this Champagne. offers a nose peach and butterscotch aromas. It has a creamy mouth feel and is long on the palate, although without a lot of complexity.

**Pehu-Simonet** David Pehu produces outstanding estate-bottled Champagnes from Grand Cru vineyards in both the Montagne de Reims and Côte des Blancs. His estate consists of 7.5 hectares of vines. His wines are mainly Pinot Noir-based from Verzeney and neighboring villages. His Blanc de Blanc is sourced from Mesnil-sur-Oger. He avoids malolactic fermentation to give his Champagnes greater finesse and purity of expression. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY



**Pehu-Simonet N.V. Selection Brut (\$49) 91** (Disgorged 5/2012) The "Selection" is Pehu's non-vintage brut which is a blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. It is medium yellow in color and has a full mousse and a fruit rich palate with notes of toast and yeast. It is citrusy and creamy on the palate, with a long finish. **Pehu-**

**Simonet NV Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$72) 92+** (Disgorged 5/2012) This Blanc de Blancs is 100% Chardonnay from Mesnil-sur-Oger. It is full-bodied and ripe with aromas of orchard fruit and yeast. Aged for 38 months on the lees It is beautifully balanced and elegant on the palate with a long finish. **Pehu-Simonet NV Blanc de Noir Brut**

**Champagne (\$72) 92** (Disgorged 5/2012) The Blanc de Noir is produced from 100% Verzenay Pinot Noir from the 2008 vintage. About 60% of the wine is fermented in barrel and aged on the lees for 38 months. It is crisp and bright on the attack offering aromas of red berry and plum fruit. It has a creamy, yet elegant mouth feel with a long, flavorful, chalky finish. **Pehu-Simonet NV Brut Rose (\$61) 92** (Disgorged 3/2012) A blend of 70% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir vin rouge from Verzenay. It boasts a salmon color, dried rose petals, and ripe red berry aromas. Aged on the lees for 36 months, it is full and creamy in the mouth with bold red berry flavors. Finishes with a chalky tannin note. Produced from 2008 base wine and 20% reserve wine. **Pehu-Simonet NV Transparence Extra-Brut (\$55) 92+** (Disgorged 5/2012) A blend of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay based on the 2006 vintage with some reserve wine from 2005. While it has a relatively low-dosage at 3g/l, this extra brut is nicely balanced and flavorful with a creamy palate and a very dry finish. It offers aromas and flavors of dried red berries, brioche and roasted nuts.

**Philipponnat** Established in 1910 by Pierre Philipponnat, this house is currently owned by Bruno Paillard and the BCC group. Since 1999 Charles Philipponnat, the grand nephew of Pierre Philipponnat, has headed operations. Philipponnat owns 18 hectares of vines all located in Mareuil sur Aÿ. It is best known for its Clos des Goisses, produced from a 5.5 hectare vineyard site of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The Grand Blanc is the estate's excellent Blanc de Blancs. **Importer:** Winebow, Lake Success, New York.



**Philipponnat 2004 Grand Blanc Champagne (\$70) 89** (disgorged 3/2011) The Grand Blanc has a pale yellow hue and light one-dimensional fruit flavors of apple and citrus with yeast notes. It is sharp and crisp on the attack with creamy richness and hints of minerals.

Nicely balanced, it is blended from Chardonnay grapes from Grand Cru and 1er Cru vineyards of the Côtes des Blancs and Montagne de Reims .

**Perrier-Jouët** This Champagne house located in Epernay was founded in 1811 by Pierre-Nicolas-Marie Perrier and his wife, Adele Jouët. The estate consists of 266 acres of grand cru and 1er cru vineyards. Perrier-Jouët is best known for its glamorous Cuvée Belle Epoque (known as Fleur de Champagne in the U.S.) which comes in bottles adorned with enamel-painted anenomes. Perrier-Jouët is currently owned by Pernod Ricard and is producing some fine Champagnes, although its Cuvée Belle Epoque is not at the same quality level as past vintages. **Importer:** Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY



**Perrier-Jouët NV Grand Brut (\$50) 89** The Grand Brut is pale straw in color with a delicate bouquet revealing a hint of citrus. It is fresh and crisp on the palate with high acidity, light fruit flavors, and a touch of sweetness on

the finish. **Perrier-Jouët 2004 Fleur de Champagne Rosé Cuvée Belle-Epoque Brut (\$279) 92** This lovely rosé is a blend of Grand Cru Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It has a delicate nose of red berries, plum, smoke and yeast. It offers a creamy mousse, a light and elegant mid-palate, and a refined and persistent finish. A light and very feminine Champagne.

**Pierre Péters** This family estate, established in 1840, is today managed by Rodolphe Péters. It consists of 18 hectares, most of which are in the grand cru villages of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Avize and Cramant. The estate follows sustainable viticulture practices, eschewing the use of insecticides and maintains low yields. The wines are fermented in stainless steel and reveal brisk acidity, minerality and excellent balance. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines. Syosset, NY



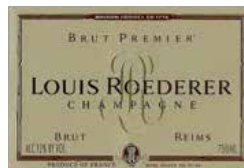
**Pierre Pétres NV Brut "Cuvée de Réserve" (\$58) 91** This 100% Chardonnay displays a creamy mousse with aromas of pear and melon. It is clean and quite zesty on the palate with notes of ripe lemon, apple and lees. It has lovely balance with bright acidity and great length and purity on the finish. Spends 24 months en tirage. **Pierre Pétres 2008 Brut Millésime 91+** The Brut Millésime is also 100% Chardonnay and spends 4+ yrs en tirage. It has a chalk mineral nose with hints of lemon zest and is lovely and quite elegant on the palate with a persistent finish. **Pierre Pétres 2005 Cuvée Spéciale Les Chetillons Brut Millésime (\$118) 91+** The Cuvée Spéciale is rich and ripe on the palate with good depth of flavor. It has floral and citrus aromas with notes of yeast and minerals. A lovely wine that is beautifully layered, long and elegant. It spends 6+ years en tirage. **Pierre Pétres NV Rosé for Albane (\$72) 92** A blend of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Meunier saignée, this rosé is vinified en blanc. It displays fragrant red berry fruit aromas on the nose and subtle and flavorful fresh fruit flavors on the palate. It is chalky and elegant on the finish.

**Pommery** Founded in 1836, this firm became highly successful under Madame Louise Pommery who took control of the company after the death of her husband in 1858. Under her management, Pommery became a great Grande-Marque house producing many Champagnes of distinction. Today Pommery owns 759 acres of vineyards, the largest of any firm's in champagne. The basic NV bruts are of average quality, but the Grand Cru Vintage Champagne and Cuvée Louise are excellent. **Importer:** Vranken Pommery America, New York NY



**Pommery NV Blanc de Blancs "Summer Time" Champagne 88** This Blanc de Blancs has a yellow gold hue and light fruit aromas on the nose with a frothy mousse and light creaminess on the palate. It reveals simple yellow fruit flavors, mineral notes and a short finish. **Pommery NV Brut Royal Champagne (\$35) 89** The NV Brut Royal is the flagship wine of this estate. A blend of 1/3 Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Pinot Meunier, it offers a creamy mousse and flavors of apple combining touches of bitterness and sweetness on the palate. **Pommery 2004 Grand Cru Vintage Champagne (\$70) 91** The 2004 Grand Cru Vintage is a blend of 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Chardonnay. Aged for seven years on the lees, it exhibits light cherry fruit and herbal notes with a touch of yeast on the palate. It is creamy with light minerality and a creamy texture. **Pommery 1999 Cuvée Louise (\$170) 93** The Cuvée Louise is a blend of 64% Chardonnay and 36% Pinot Noir sourced from three grand cru vineyards: Ay (Pinot Noir) Avize and Cramat (Chardonnay). It has a medium yellow gold hue and refined aromas of dried stone fruit, minerals and nuts. Aged for 12 years on the lees, it is creamy on the palate with ripe lingering fruit flavors and excellent balance.

**Louis Roederer** Established in 1776, the House of Louis Roederer is one of Champagne's most illustrious family-owned estates. Currently managed by Frédérick Rouzaud, Louis Roederer follows sustainable viticulture practices on its 200+ hectares of estate vineyards—40 hectares are farmed biodynamical and 15 organically. The talented and personable Jean-Baptiste Lecaillon is Louis Roederer's Chef de Caves. Cristal is Louis Roederer's finest and best known Champagne, but all of Louis Roderer's Champagnes are first-class. **Importer:** Maisons Marques & Domaines Oakland, CA



**Louis Roederer NV Brut Premier (\$43) 91** The Roederer Brut Premier is a blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay, and 20% Pinot Meunier. It is fresh tasting, elegant and fruit rich with a creamy generous mouth feel and excellent acidity. The cuvée is sourced from 40 different plots and is an assemblage of six vintages with 35% malolactic fermentation and a dosage of between 10 and 11 g/l. **Louis Roederer NV Extra Dry "Carte Blanche" (\$43) 91** This cuvee is a blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Munier. Barrel fermented with weekly battonage, it exhibits a lovely eye of the partridge color, a floral bouquet, and a creamy, lightly fruited and very dry understated palate with high acidity and excellent balance. **Louis Roederer 2005 Blanc de Blancs (\$85) 93** (Disgorged 2010) This is a 100% Chardonnay primarily from estate vineyards in Les Mesnil sur Oger and Avize. Yellow-gold in color, it is partially vinified in oak but does not undergo malolactic fermentation. It offers aromas of white flowers and melon and has a soft and creamy texture with moderate acidity fresh fruit flavors and minerality. Delicate and fresh tasting with only 4 bars of pressure like a Cremant. **Louis Roederer 2005 Vintage Brut (\$75) 92+** Light amber in color, the 2005 Brut Vintage is a blend of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay. 30% aged in oak, it has a rich and creamy mouth feel with lovely flavors of apple and melon. It is crisp and lively on the palate with a fruity texture and crisp acidity on a long finish. **Louis Roederer 2006 Vintage Brut (\$75) 93** The 2006 Brut Vintage Champagne of Louis Roederer is a ripe and generous wine that shows the rich, round and full fruit flavors identified with the house. A blend of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay, all estate grapes, Roederer's vintage Champagne is matured for four years on the lees with a dosage of between 8 and 10g/l. It has fine bubbles, a rich mousse with aromas of minerals and chalk, and a creamy mouth feel, good acidity and perfect balance. **Louis Roederer 2005 Cristal (\$229) 97** Cristal is a rich and complex champagne made of 55% Pinot Noir and 45% Chardonnay sourced from 35 year old vines. It displays delicate aromas and flavors of stone fruit, citrus and minerality. Aged for six years on the lees, it is very refined in the mouth with ultra-fine bubbles and elegance on the palate. The grapes are sourced from the finest vineyards of Montagne de Reimes, the Vallée de la Marne and the Côte des Blancs. **Louis Roederer 1993 Cristal 94** Cristal is usually predominantly Pinot Noir, but harvest rains

resulted in a mostly Chardonnay (52%) based cuvee this year. Almost 20 years after the vintage, it's drinking beautifully with an autolytic nose of butterscotch and caramel, a soft, creamy palate, and a long finish with notes of earth and mushroom. It still retains its delicacy and freshness as we discovered drinking it at lunch at Louis Roederer.

**Louis Roederer 2007 Vintage Rosé (\$75) 92** The 2007 Vintage Rosé is made of 66% Pinot Noir and 34% Chardonnay. It has a light amber/salmon color and delicate aromas of dried cherries and citrus. It is full and lush in the mouth with a creamy texture and fresh fruity flavors. It is made following the saignée method and 20% of the wine is aged in oak for four years with weekly batonnage. Beautifully balanced and refreshing to drink, with a fine mousse and multi-faceted flavors. It has sufficient power to pair with duck breast or sweetbreads.

**Pol Roger** This house was founded in 1849 by Pol Roger, a native of Ay. In 1876 he shipped his first champagnes to England, which was to become the firm's major market. The house owns 198 acres around Epernay and along the northern Côte des Blancs. Pol Roger Champagnes are known for their fresh, light and fragrant style found in the White Foil and Vintage Brut. The Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill is an extraordinary Champagne of great refinement and elegance. **Importer:** Frederick Wildman and Sons, Ltd. New York, NY

**Pol Roger NV Brut (\$35) 91** This NV Brut is a classic blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. It offers a yellow flowered bouquet with a crisp attack and a rich and flavorful palate showing creamy ripe citrus, minerals and chalky notes. It is beautifully balanced and elegant through to the finish. **Pol Roger 2000 Brut Vintage Champagne (\$75) 92** The 2000 Brut Vintage is bright and crisp on the attack offering freshly baked bread. Bright and crisp on the attack. Creamy mouth feel, lavish. Nicely delineated. **Pol Roger 1999 Brut Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill Champagne (\$250) 96** The blend of this outstanding cuvée is not disclosed, but would appear to include a dominant role for Pinot Noir. It is rich, full-bodied and elegant with a fine mousse. It is refined with aromas and flavors of pear, orange peel, spice and light smoke. It is yeasty on the palate, beautifully focused and precise. **Pol Roger 2004 Brut Rosé Champagne (\$85) 91** The 2004 Brut rosé is a blend of 50% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 15% Pinot Noir vinified "en rouge" and added to the final blend. The wine exhibits a dark eye of the partridge color and an effusive nose of red fruit and brioche. It has a very fresh and flavorful palate of ripe cherry fruit, a creamy mouth feel, and a long elegant finish. **Pol Roger NV Cuvée de Réserve Demi-Sec Rich (\$48) 89** This Champagne is a blend of equal parts of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier assembled from 30 base wines. It has bright yellow color and aromas of sweet summer melon on the nose. It is off dry on the attack with yeast and melon notes on the palate. It is full, rich and sweet with adequate natural acidity and a long finish.

**Champagne Barons de Rothschild** In 2005 the three branches of the Rothschild family and other families in Champagne united to establish this new house based in Reims. Long term contracts were established with selected vignerons in outstanding Grand and Premier Cru villages particularly in the Côte des Blancs. The Champagne Barons de Rothschild produces three Champagnes with Chardonnay serving as the major contributing varietal. The wines are elegant and refined. **Importer:** Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, New York



**Champagne Barons de Rothschild NV Brut (\$100) 90** The NV Brut is a blend of 60% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier (mainly from Grand Cru vineyards) and 40% from reserve wines. Gold in color it reveals delicate aromas of red berries, orchard fruit and toast. It

is creamy on the palate with fruitiness, complex autolytic notes, good acidity and a low dosage. **Champagne Barons de Rothschild NV Blanc de Blancs (\$125) 91** This 100% Chardonnay is sourced from top Côte des Blancs vineyards in Avize, Cramant, Mesnil-Sur-Oger and Vertus and 40% from reserve wines. It has a lovely floral bouquet of orchard fruit, herbs and brioche. It has a lovely mousse and is rich and creamy on the palate with hints of green apples and citrus and fine acidity. **Champagne Barons de Rothschild NV Rosé Champagne (\$125) 91** The NV Rosé is a blend of 85% Chardonnay from the Côte des Blancs and 15% Pinot Noir from the Montagne de Reims that includes 5-6% vinified as red wine. It offers aromas of dried cherry, raspberry and brioche with light autolytic notes. Aged for three years in the cellar, it is full-bodied, flavorful and nicely balanced on the palate with a long dry zesty finish.

**Ruinart** Champagne's oldest sparkling wine house, Ruinart was established in 1729 by the entrepreneur Nicolas Ruinart. Due to its high quality, over the years Ruinart Champagne was sold to royalty all over Europe and in Russia. Today it is one of the most prestigious Champagne houses in France and is one of the Grandes Marques. Ruinart Champagnes are sourced from the finest cru vineyards in and around Reims and are Chardonnay-based. Dom Ruinart is their top-of-the-line prestige cuvee. **Importer:** Moët Hennessy U.S.A. New York, NY



**Ruinart Blanc de Blancs (\$55) 91** This Blanc de Blancs is mainly sourced from the 2008 vintage with 25% reserve wines from 2005 and 2007, all from premier and grand cru vineyards. It has fresh aromas of light lemon jasmine, and fresh fruit. It is lively and crisp with moderate acidity and creaminess resulting from 10 days of malolactic fermentation in stainless steel. It is beautifully balanced with hints of peach, mint and pineapple. **Ruinart Rosé (\$65)**

**91** The Rosé is also from 2008 with 25% of 2005, 2006, 2007 and consists of a blend of 45% Chardonnay and 55% Pinot Noir of which 18 % is vinified red wine. It offers aromas of fresh red berries and guava. It is creamy on the palate with sweet red berries and a dry and chalky mouth feel. It has just a light hint of sweetness and an herbal note on the finish. **Ruinart 2002 Dom Ruinart (\$250) 94** This Champagne is blended from 100% Grand Cru grapes with 66% from the Côtes des Blancs and 34% from the north of the Montagne de Reims. It has a yellow straw color and is very aromatic, showing notes of ripe yellow fruit, shortbread, a fresh hint of nutmeg and lemon peel. Round, rich and creamy on the palate, this Champagne will age beautifully over the next 25+ years. **Ruinart 1998 Dom Ruinart (\$170) 96** The Dom Ruinart 1998 has a rich mousse and a highly aromatic nose of fresh apple, cherimoya, butterscotch and toasted oak. It is rich and creamy on the palate with toasted notes and is beautifully balanced with refinement and finesse on the finish. Superb wine!! **Ruinart 1998 Dom Ruinart Rosé Champagne (\$300) 96** Copper and amber in color, the 1998 Dom Ruinart Rosé offers a fruity bouquet of orange zest, brown baking spice and a hint of nutmeg. Aged for 10 years in the cellar, it is ethereal, elegant and very fresh. Made of 84% Chardonnay and 16% Pinot Noir.

**Domaine Jacques Selosse** Winemaking at this famous, iconoclastic estate is in the hands of Anselme Selosse. Selosse owns 7.5 hectares of vines, four in Avize and the rest spread over different parcels in the Côte des Blancs and the Montagne de Reims. Anselme Selosse generally follows organic and sustainable viticultural practices in the vineyard. His Champagnes are fermented in barrels with indigenous yeasts that are also used for bottle fermentation. Kept on the lees for five to ten years, Selosse wines are oxidative in style with complex layered flavors, and considerable elegance. **Importer:** Rare Wine Company, Napa, CA



**Jacques Selosse Abbouney Le Bout du Clos Extra Brut Grand Cru Champagne (\$200) 94** The Le Bout du Clos is entirely from the 2004 vintage. A blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay it offers aromas of red berry fruit, chalk and minerals on the nose. On the palate it reveals ripe flavors of

cherry and melon with toasted oak. This is a Champagne of considerable complexity, refinement and elegance. **Jacques Selosse Mareuil-sur-Aÿ Sous le Mont Extra Brut Premier Champagne (\$200) 90** This is a single-vineyard Champagne from the 2005 vintage. It has light red berry fruit with oxidative and mineral aromas. It has a chalky bitterness on the palate with very high acidity. Anselme Selosse told us he likes drinking this Champagne with duck. **Jacques Selosse 2002 Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$225) 94** This Blanc de Blancs offers perfumed, tropical fruit aromas (pineapple, mango) with mineral notes. It is light and delicate on the palate with perfect balance and a long nuanced finish. **Jacques Selosse 1999 Extra**

**Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$225) 95** The 1999 Blanc de Blancs exhibits rich autolytic aromas and great depth, breath and complexity of flavor. Although 100% Chardonnay, it offers hints of red berry fruit and loam. **Jacques Selosse NV Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Version Originale (\$200) 95+** No dosage. Lush and rich on the palate, the Version Originale is light and frothy with flavors of moderate intensity. This multi-vintage cuvée is sourced from grapes of 2000, 2001 and 2002 grown in the middle of slope on limestone and chalk soils. Much less oxidative and sherry like, more elegant, chalky.

**St. Chamant.** Located in Epernay, this estate was established in 1930 by Pierre and Hélène Coquille. In 1950, their son Christian took over operations of the estate. Their Champagnes are sourced from 11.5 hectares of vineyards—almost exclusively Chardonnay—in the Grand Cru village of Chouilly in the Côtes des Blancs. Their Champagnes are very well made. **Importer:** Martines Wines, Inc. Novato, CA



**St. Chamant NV Blanc de Blancs (\$58) 91+** This yellow-gold NV Blanc de Blancs has rich and complex aromas of minerals, toast and tropical fruit on the nose. It has ripe, autolytic flavors on the palate with medium acidity, creamy mouth feel and a long persistent finish. **St. Chamant 2002 Millésime Brut Blanc de Blanc (\$90) 94** Dark

golden color. The 2002 Millésime Brut Blanc de Blancs has a complex autolytic nose with a touch of flowers and orchard fruit. It has richly layered fruit flavors with notes of yeast and brioche. Soft, lush and elegant, it reveals hints of minerals and earth on the palate. A terrific Champagne.

**Taittinger** Champagne Taittinger is a family house. It has its cellars in Reims and owns 300 hectares of outstanding Champagne vineyards in the Côtes de Blanc and the Montagne de Reims. It produces some of the finest and most elegant NV and vintage Champagnes of the Grands Marques. The NV Comtes de Champagne is Taittinger's prestige cuvee and one of Champagne's finest Blanc de Blancs. **Importer:** Kobrand Corporation New York, NY



**Taittinger NV Cuvée Brut Reserve Reims (\$20) 92+** This Cuvée Brut is pale gold in color and aromatic with a rich mousse offering aromas of fragrant berries, toast and yeast. It is complex and layered on the palate with a round creamy texture, beautiful balance and a long elegant finish. Incredible value!

**Taittinger NV Cuvée Prélude Grands Crus Reims 92+** Produced exclusively from Grand cru vineyards, the Cuvée Prélude is a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It is very fragrant with extra fine bubbles and aromas of yellow fruit and toasted oak. Its extended aging and lees contact contribute to a complex palate and fine texture. The finish is long, dry and steely. Outstanding. **Taittinger NV Cuvée**

**Prestige Rosé Brut Reims (\$20) 90+** Blended from 55% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay, and 15% Pinot Meunier grapes, the Cuvée Brut Rosé exhibits a pale pink copper color and a fresh aromatic mousse and light red raspberry fruit, yeast and earth aromas. These are followed by a delicate creamy palate, light red fruit flavors and a nice long finish. **Taittinger NV Noctourne Reims (\$80) 90** Noctourne is a non-vintage Sec Champagne blended from select base wines with an emphasis on Chardonnay. The cuvée is composed of 40% Chardonnay and 60% Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Yellow-gold in color, it displays stone fruit on the nose with yeast and toast notes. On the palate, it has big volume, a creamy silky texture, and an elegant persistent finish. **Taittinger 2005 Cuvée Brut "Millésime" (\$70) 93** The Brut Millésimé, a blend of 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir from the 2005 vintage, displays a yellow-gold hue, a refined mousse, and aromas of lemon curd, toast and minerals. On the palate it is crisp and chalky with complex flavors of toast, minerals and dried red fruit stemming from five years of aging. It has a clean, crisp, long finish that is both elegant and persistent. **Taittinger 2000 Cuvée Comtes de Champagne (\$150) 94** Taittinger's Comtes de Champagne was first produced in 1952. It is made of 100% Chardonnay sourced from grand cru vineyards in the Côte des Blancs and is only produced in the best vintage years. Five percent of the wines used to make it are aged for four months in new and used oak barrels and the champagne itself is aged for almost 10 years before release. Medium yellow gold in color, it boasts an aromatic nose of ripe apple and freshly baked bread. It is refined on the palate showing light fruit notes, smoky toasted oak and a full, lush creamy mouth feel.

**Michel Turgay Cuvée Brut Blanc de Blanc Réserve Sélection (\$58) 91** This is a delicious Blanc de Blancs from Grand Cru vineyards in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Côte des Blancs. It offers a rich mousse and aromas of apple and dried fruit with brioche. It is creamy and full in the mouth showing hints of honey and herbs. It has layers of flavor much like a complex vintage Champagne. **Importer:** Dionysos Imports Lorton, VA

**Varnier-Fannièrè** A small 4 ha Grand Cru vineyard provides the mostly Chardonnay fruit for these wines from Avize. Except for the rosé, these wines are all 100% Chardonnay, pressed using the old-style Coquard and with full malo fermentation. The Champagnes are clean, chalky, and sometimes fleshy. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

**Varnier-Fannièrè NV Cuvée de Jean Fannièrè Origine Extra Brut (\$68) 92** A very dry wine with just 3 g/l dosage, this Champagne is very clean and elegant, with interesting complexity on the nose and palate and showing chalky minerals on the finish. **Varnier-Fannièrè NV Brut Grand Cru (\$57) 91** Lush and rich, this is a full-bodied blanc de blancs that reveals its varietal character with fleshy fruit and lovely chalk notes on a very fine and long finish. **Varnier-Fannièrè NV Cuvée St. Denis Brut (\$67) 92** A

delicious, light and elegant Champagne with an unusually creamy mousse that fills the mouth. Very clean and focused with chalk notes on the finish. **Varnier-Fannièrè NV Rosé Brut (\$75) 93** This is one of our favorite rosé Champagnes, fairly priced for the quality. It shows an intensity of red cherry fruit that runs throughout, with a lovely softness on the palate and lingering minerality on the finish. 10 g/l dosage. A blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir from Ay. Superb.

**Vazart-Coquart** This family estate owns 11 hectares of vines in Chouilly that are almost exclusively planted to Chardonnay. The average age of the vines is 30 years. Winemaking is in the hands of Jacques Vazart, grandson of Camille Vazart, founder of the estate. The wines are fermented in stainless steel tanks and undergo malolactic fermentation. Vazart-Coquart Champagnes are generally ripe, fragrant and mouth filling. **Importer:** Pas Mal, Tenafly, NJ and other importers.



**Vazart-Coquart 2005 Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$91) 91** The 2005 Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru displays a very rich mousse and a floral bouquet with yeasty notes. It is rich and creamy in the mouth, with a very flavorful long

finish. Pleasing to drink. **Vazart-Coquart 2004 Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru (\$92) 92** The 2004 Blanc de Blancs displays fragrant aromas of ripe lemon citrus, melon and yeast. It is very lively and mouth filling, very crisp and flavorful. A very focused and well-balanced cuvée.

**Jean Vesselle** is a family business. This family has been making Champagne in Bouzy for more than 300 years. Their estate vineyards total 15 hectares and are planted with 90% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay vines. They follow sustainable practices in the vineyard and are meticulous in the cellar. The Oeil de Pedrix and Demi-sec Rosé are among the most interesting wines. **Importer:** Dionysos Imports Lorton, VA and North Berkeley Wine, Berkeley, CA



**Jean Vesselle Réserve (\$64) 89** This Champagne is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay sourced from 30+ year old vines. It exhibits red berry fruit with hints of minerals and toast. It offers a layered palate with sweet red fruit and a long finish.

**Jean Vesselle NV Rosé de Saignée (\$54) 90** Dark rose in color, this is a fruit forward Rosé with fragrant aromas of mulberry, mint and earth. It shows red fruit flavors on the palate with good depth and persistence. Stylistically, it is somewhat like a sparkling wine or cremant. **Jean Vesselle NV Oeil de Pedrix (\$54) 90** The "eye of the partridge" is Jean Vesselle's orange pink Blanc de Noirs of 100% Pinot Noir. It reveals aromas of strawberries and yeasty brioche. It is mouth filling with intense fruit flavor and crisp acidity on the finish. A wonderful food wine. **Jean Vesselle NV Demi-sec Rosé (\$60) 91** A bountiful, seductive

semi-dry Champagne that exhibits a sweet nose of cherry pie and jasmine. Delightfully fruity and full, with sweet, lacy layers of red fruits and candied ginger on the palate. It has a lush and creamy mousse with red cherry and mulberry flavors. Mouth filling with good acidity and balance and a nice dry crisp finish.

**Veuve Clicquot** One of the very finest historic Grande Marques of Champagne, Veuve Clicquot gained fame under Nicole-Barbe Clicquot-Ponsardin who in 1805 at a young age (27 years old) was obliged upon the premature death of her husband to become a Champagne merchant. Her outstanding success in building Veuve Clicquot is memorialized in the estate's Grand Dame champagne. Today, Veuve Clicquot owns more than 300 hectares of grand cru and premier cru vineyards and purchases grapes from hundreds of growers. Its Champagnes are rich and bold in flavor and have a distinctive yellow label that is recognized around the world. The affable Dominique Demarville is currently Chef de Cave and is an outstanding winemaker.. **Importer:** Moët-Hennessy USA. New York, NY



**Veuve Clicquot NV Brut (Yellow Label)**

**Champagne (\$45) 90+** This Yellow Label is made with 2008 fruit and reserve grapes. It is rich and full-flavored with hints of minerals and chalk. It has a lively crisp character

with bold clean flavors. A blend of 52% Pinot Noir and 48% Chardonnay, it spends three years on the lees.

**Veuve Clicquot NV Brut Rosé (\$60) 92+** The NV Brut Rosé is a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir (13% red wine) from the 2007 vintage and other years. Pink salmon in color. It offers aromas of red berry fruit, brioche and licorice. It is intensely flavored with a creamy mouth feel and has a long lush finish.

**Veuve Clicquot, 1998 La Grande Dame (\$130) 94** La Grande Dame is Veuve Clicquot's finest Champagne. A blend of 64% Pinot Noir and 36% Chardonnay, grapes are sourced from eight grand cru vineyards originally owned by the Grande Dame. La Grande Dame Champagne offers light fruit, nuts and autolytic aromas on the nose. On the palate it is creamy, mouth filling and beautifully balanced with a long elegant finish.

**Veuve Clicquot 1989 Grand Dame Brut Rosé (\$225) 94+** Gold copper in color, the Grand Dame Brut Rosé displays a complex nose of caramel, truffle, and red cherry kirsch. It has a complex palate with layers of flavors that include red berries, caramel, mocha, and truffle. Full bodied, fresh and elegant on the finish.

**Veuve Clicquot 2004 Vintage Brut (\$65) 93** This outstanding vintage Champagne exhibits a lovely rich mousse and complex yeasty aromas and flavors of ripe melon, citrus, brioche, spice, and vanilla. Aged for 5 years on the lees, it is beautifully balanced with a generous mouth feel, excellent flavor intensity and a long elegant finish. A blend of 60% Pinot Noir, 7% Pinot Meunier and 33% Chardonnay from 17 Grand and Premier Crus vineyards.

**Veuve Fourny & Fils** This is a small house producing quality Premier Cru Champagnes from Vertus on the Côte de Blancs. Brothers Charles-Henry and Emmanuel Fourny sustainably farm nearly nine hectares of vineyards and have been carrying on the family winegrowing tradition since 1993. The House produces a variety of classic grower Champagnes and a special Extra Brut cuvée from its Clos Faubourg Notre Dame (a vineyard surrounded by walls). The Champagnes reveal freshness, purity and notable minerality and have low dosage. **Importer:** Simon "N" Cellars, Charlottesville, VA and Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, CA



**Veuve Fourny & Fils Grande Réserve Brut 1er Cru (\$43) 92** A blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir, the Grande Réserve is sourced from 30 year-old vines on chalky soils. It has effusive fresh young apple with a hint of year/banana on the nose. These carry over to

the palate, which is quite creamy and full offering lovely mouth feel. The wine is fermented at cool temperatures in stainless steel and 1/4 of the cuvée goes through malolactic fermentation. Aged in the bottle for 2.5 years before release. Dosage is between 5-6 grams/liter.

**Veuve Fourny & Fils Extra Brut Cuvée R 1er Cru (\$60) 93** This blend consists of 90% Chardonnay, 5% Pinot Noir and 5% Pinot Meunier fermented in small oak casks. It has a finely perfumed nose showing exotic fruit notes. It is nicely focused with rich but not overripe fruit and good depth and complexity, finishing clean and bright with lingering rich fruit.

**Veuve Fourny & Fils Rosé Brut 1er Cru (\$56) 91** The Rosé is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Noir. It has a pretty salmon pink color and aromas of bright fresh red berries with a hint of yeast. It is also fresh and creamy on the palate with fine red berry flavors. Similar to the nose finishing long and dry.

**Veuve Fourny & Fils Douces Sec 1er Cru (\$43) 90+** This dessert Champagne is a blend of 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir with a dosage of 20 grams/liter. It has a nose of citrus and yeast and a richly flavored palate, just slightly off dry with lots of yeast and brioche notes. It is very creamy with a rich mouth feel and a long fruity finish.

**Vilmart et Cie.** Vilmart is one of the finest grower-producers in Champagne. Winemaker Laurent Champs farms his 11 hectares (12 parcels) following organic and sustainable practices. All of Vilmart's wines are fermented and aged in oak in different sized barrels-foudres for non-vintage Champagne and 225 liter barrels for vintage Champagne. Malolactic fermentation is avoided. The Coeur de Cuvée is the estate's outstanding single vintage prestige cuvée. **Importer:** Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY



**Vilmart NV Grand Cellier Brut (\$74) 92** (Disgorged 9/2011) This NV Brut is a blend of 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir. It exhibits lovely aromas of melon, pear and red berries. Fermented in oak for 10 months, with no malo, and aged on the lees for three years, the wine reveals a vibrant structure and freshness that will improve with aging. **Vilmart Cuvée Grand Cellier d'Or Brut, 2007 (\$93) 93** (Disgorged 11/2011) The Cuvée Grand Cellier d'Or Brut is a blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir. It displays a medium-yellow hue and a rich mousse with aromas of ripe melon and yeast on the nose. Fermented in oak for 10 months and aged for five years on the lees, the palate reveals light lemon flavors with sandalwood and is very crisp and lively with hints of minerals and chalk and a long finish. **Vilmart 2004 Coeur de Cuvée Champagne (\$148) 94** A blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir, the Coeur de Cuvée is sourced

from a 50-55 year old low yielding vineyard with the base wine aged in used oak barrels. It's fresh and light on the nose, while the palate is rich and elegant with with biscuit and mineral notes and a full-mouth feel. Aged 7 years on the lees, with a dosage of 8-9 g/l. **Vilmart 2003 Coeur de Cuvée Champagne 92** (Disgorged 2011) This Champagne from a warm vintage exhibits rich, ripe fruit, minerals, and oxidative notes. It is rich in flavor but low in acidity, lacking the lightness and elegance of the 2004 vintage. **Vilmart 2002 Coeur de Cuvée Champagne 95** (Disgorged 5/2010) The 2002 Coeur de Cuvée is outstanding and from an almost perfect vintage. It has excellent acidity yet is soft and round with vibrancy, ripeness and elegance on the palate. It has a lush mouth feel with refined and complex flavors of ripe melon, crème brulee, nuts and oxidative notes. This is an amazing Champagne that has retained much of its original vitality. Highly recommended, if you can find it.

## Annex I Dosage and Champagne Styles

French Term	Residual Sugar	Flavor Profile
Extra Brut	0-6 (g/l)	Highly acidic, bone dry
Brut	0-15 (g/l)	Can vary between dry and fairly fruity; overlaps with both Extra Brut, and Extra Sec
Extra Sec	12-20 (g/l)	Medium to off dry; fat, fruit forward common style in the U.S. market
Sec	17-35 (g/l)	Medium dry to slightly sweet
Demi Sec	35-50 (g/l)	Slightly sweet to very sweet
Doux	50+ (g/l)	Extremely sweet, not commonly made

## Annex II Map of Champagne



SOURCE: Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne







## Previous Wine Reports



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