

# CHAMPAGNE

## NON-VINTAGE

# Champagne NV



Champagne was born east of Paris in the region synonymous with its name. Beyond the issues of global warming, this is one of the northernmost wine production areas. Geographical location notwithstanding, the Champagne region enjoys:

- A continental climate with ocean influences.
- Unique terrain predominately composed of craie, or rather a calcareous, chalky stone, both crumbly and solid at the same time that constitutes almost two-thirds of the region's surface.

This type of geological structure performs different roles among which are:

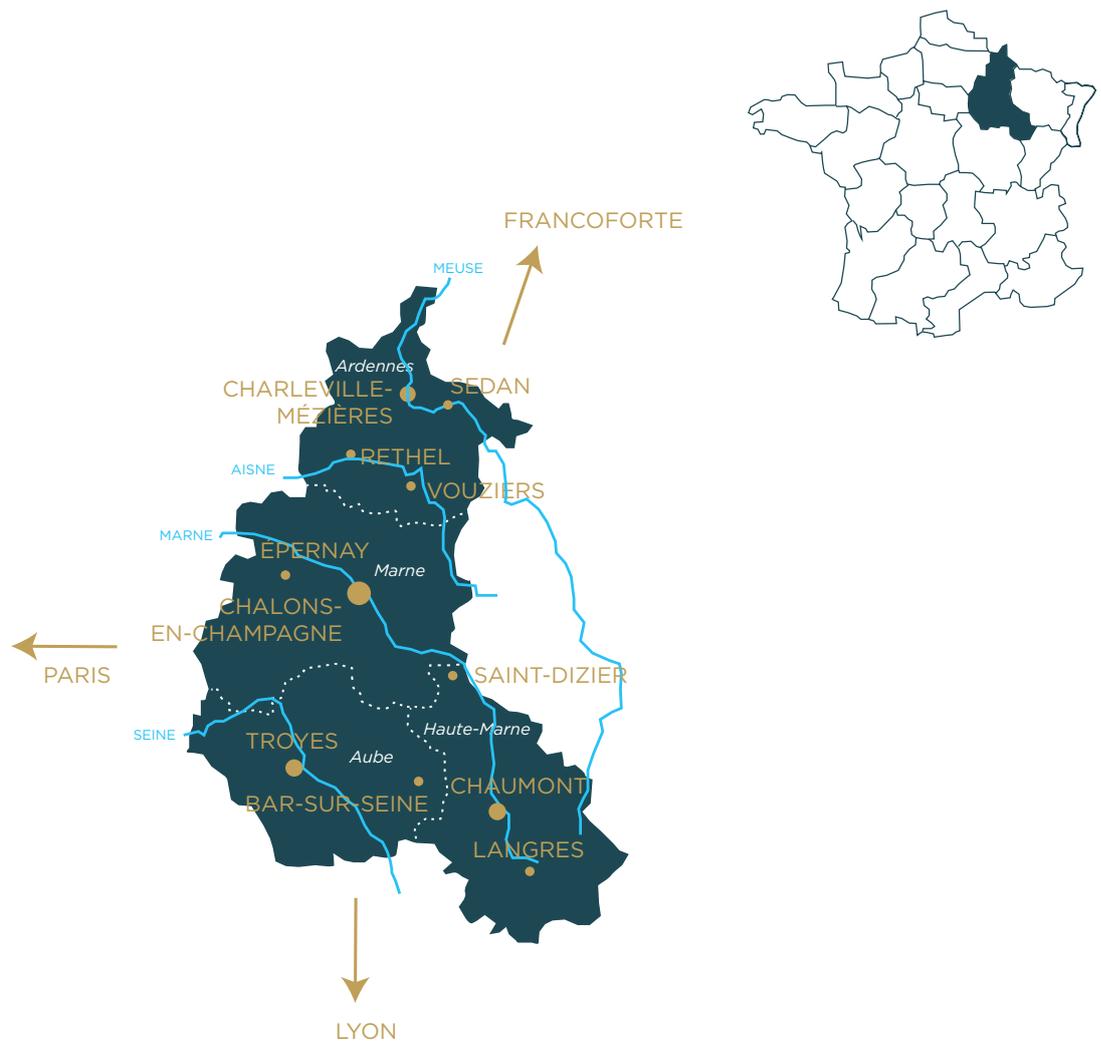
- Absorption of the daytime heat in winter in order to return it to the plants at night.
- Regulation of the distribution of water to the roots during the hot months.
- Characterization of the flavor of the area's wines, contributing to their great flavor.

The Champagne is divided into 4 large cultivation areas:

- Montagne de Reims
- Côte des Blancs
- Vallée de la Marne
- Aube

In these areas and according to the vocation of the same, three fundamental varieties of the region's wines are planted:

- **Pinot Noir** (diffuse black grape from near Montagne de Reims and Aube. Used either in a blend with other grapes or alone. In the second case, sometimes even with the addition of Pinot Meunier, the champagne is often called Blanc de Noirs).
- **Chardonnay** (grown prevalently in the Côte des Blancs. This variety is used as a complement to other grapes or by itself. In the latter case, the champagne in question takes the name Blanc de Blancs.)



• **Pinot Meunier** (Black berry typically cultivated in the Vallée de la Marne. Within the cuvée, it generally confers fruity sensations. The name of this variety is derived from the fact that the berries are covered by a sort of white powder, from which comes the name Meunier or rather, miller.)  
 In the Champagne region, albeit in much smaller quantities, though not negligible, are also cultivated Arbanne, Petit Meslier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris.  
 In each of the above listed territories, different terroirs are also present, called crus (in total over 300) each sub-divided into the following qualitative classification of the vineyard:

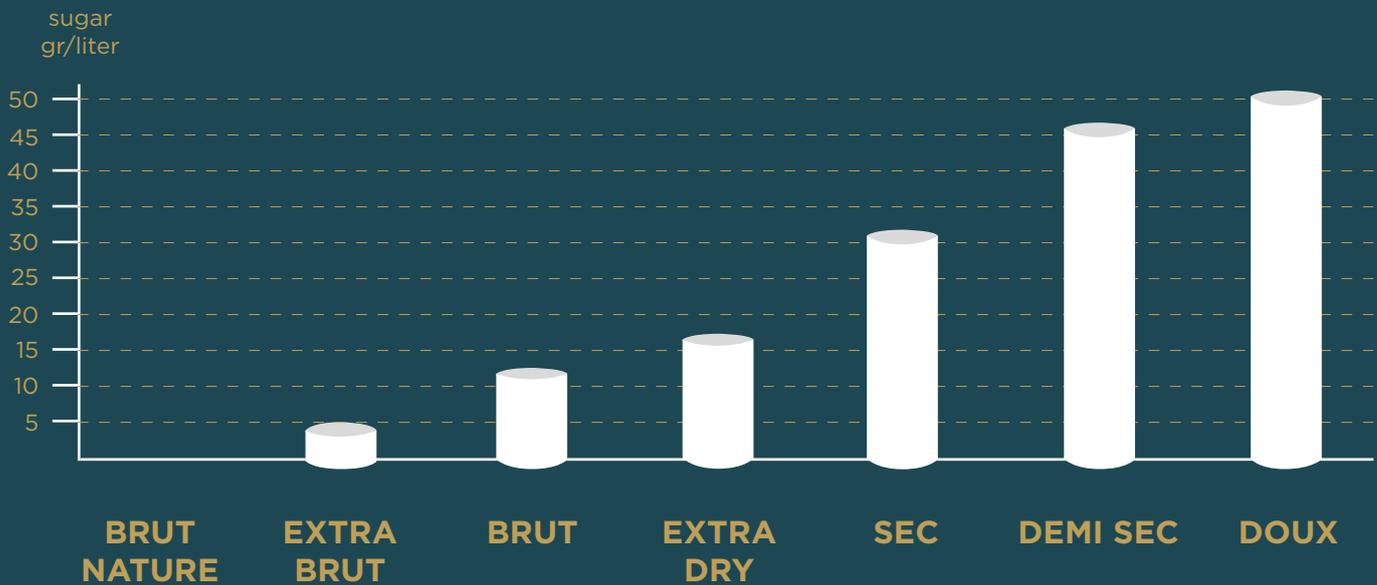
- Cru (80% of total crus)
- Premier Cru (more than 40 small towns)
- Grand Cru (17 villages, two of which are only classified by one vine)

The wines of the Champagne are produced according to the champenoise method. The categories are numerous, with the principal ones being:

- **Cuvée sans année** (the majority of commercial champagnes, in fact they are products of more than one vine as well as more than one vintage mixed together.)
- **Vintage** (all of the grapes used for this type must come from the same year, as that printed on the label.)
- **Cuvée de Prestige or Special Cuvée** (often vintage, sometimes extracted only from grapes classified as Grand Cru, remains for a long time on the lees, in some cases for more than 10 years. Generally representative of the top products of the different wineries.)
- **Rosé**

The aging varies depending on the type, even if it cannot be less than 15 months.

## DOSAGE



After disgorging, the wines undergo dosage, generally the addition of wine and sugar, the quantities of which create additional sub-types:

- **Brut Nature:** 0 gr/liter
- **Extra Brut:** max 6 gr/liter
- **Brut:** max 15 gr/liter
- **Extra Dry:** max 20 gr/liter
- **Sec:** max 35 gr/liter
- **Demi Sec:** max 50 gr/liter
- **Doux:** more than 50 gr/liter

Normally, the most diffuse champagnes are found in the Brut category, while those more “important” products of a single winery often have lower

dosages (Nature or Extra Brut) and in general, never more than 15 gr/liter.

Passing from the different production areas, to where the various intersections of vines and dosages, the champagnes are produced from two types of vigneron: the récoltant-manipulant (RM on the label) and the négociant-manipulant (NM on the label). The first, usually represent small businesses, who produce their wines with only grapes from their own property (at most only 5% can be purchased.) The négociant-manipulants, instead, are those produced from their own grapes but also with those purchased from the category to which they belong, usually, the large maisons.

# Champagne NV

## GARDINI NOTES WINE RANKING

The targets are three: short (5-8 years), medium (10-15 years) and long (more than 15 years), which denote the aging potential of the wine.



94

 **Champagne Extra Brut Cuvée n° 739** Tenuta SAN JACQUESSON

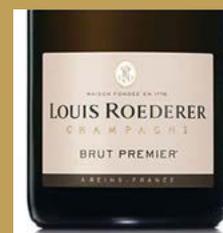
Base of Chardonnay, one-third riserva wines, oak-aged. Almost sugar-free dosage, and that which is in the glass is enough. Maturity and drinkability together, with variations on the theme of apple, spices (ginger and anise) with salt at the end. From aperitif with recent disgorgement to the table with a few years in the bottle.



94

 **Champagne Brut Premier** LOUIS ROEDERER

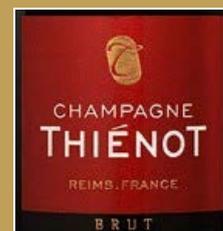
Predominately Chardonnay and Pinot Nero. To this is added 5/6 vintages and a dosage that looks exclusively for balance and not, as often occurs today, for amazement and austerity at all costs. Floral (jasmine) and citrus (almost the whole catalog) on the nose. Complex but also complete on the mouth as it alternates in a beautiful harmony between smoothness, acidity, and delicateness.



94

 **Champagne Brut** THIÉNOT

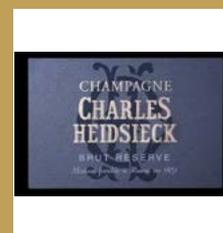
Predominately Chardonnay with an abundant use of reserve wines, and one of the most extended sojourns on the lees. A tropical and citrusy verve on the nose to which are added suggestions of white-fleshed fruit in the mouth. Spicy finish. Keep an extra bottle on hand, because of the excellent qualities of this drink.



94

 **Champagne Brut Réserve** CHARLES HEIDSIECK

The harmony and complexity come from one of the higher quotas of riserva wines (40%). The dosage does not indulge softness, even if the citrus is never very openly bitter and the apple has inflections of rennet, but also quince. On the finish, tones of yellow-fleshed fruit, hazelnut, and salt intersect. Nice persistence.



94

 **Champagne Brut** LAURENT-PERRIER

Half Chardonnay and completed with two Pinots. Perfected on the lees for a period that is never less than three years. Citrus, citrus, and more citrus. At the taste, not a monotonous perlage since citrus is well represented here by a rich catalog that varies from the roughness of lime to the roundness, however juicy, of citron. The finish recalls pineapple and star anise.

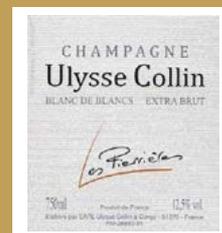


## WINE RANKING

93


**Champagne Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Les Pierrières**  
 ULYSSE COLLIN

From the Côte de Sézanne almost a wine with the pretext of a Champagne, as demonstrated by the choices of the vines and cantina adopted by Olivier Collin. Dense and well-pronounced aromas. Compact sip, time in the bottle will render it more dynamic, the flavor helps its progression, on the themes of apple, bitter orange, resin, and dried spices.



93


**Champagne Brut Réserve Grand Cru**  
 MAILLY

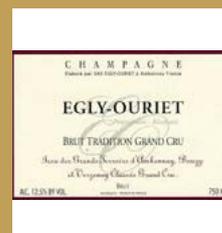
Only Chardonnay and Pinot Nero for a base of only Grand Cru grapes. Mailly is a cooperative that makes quality, in this label built for the most around 75% Pinot Nero and giving the sip, a rather vinous, citrus-like, crunchiness of yellow fruit with delicate touches of mixed berries. Its marine finish makes the profile soar.



93


**Champagne Brut Tradition Grand Cru**  
 EGLY-OURIET

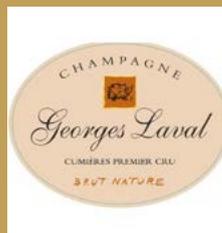
Low dosage. High instead are the quotas of Pinot Nero and those of the riserva wines. These two aspects added to the little use of oak, result in a vinous champagne that never becomes just wine with bubbles. In the mouth, the ripeness of white and yellow fruit but without oxidation. Touches of dried fruit, as well as a delicate exoticness of spices and, along with a bit of the bottle, tones of pipe tobacco.



93


**Champagne Brut Nature Cumières Premier Cru**  
 GEORGES LAVAL

Biodynamic cultivation, use of oak, autochthonous lees. Not too subtle perlage. A drink of character, determined by a biting flavor that helps to contrast those notes of citrus (citron and mandarin), yellow fruit, and hazelnut that appear at mid-sip. The final stretch, again savory, with balsamic touches of mint and anise.



92


**Champagne Brut Grand Blanc de Blancs**  
 GOSSET

Chardonnay grapes from those zones classified as Grand and Premier Crus. The aromas are potent and prone to maturity: much citrus zest and quince. In the mouth, the gustatory path is fresher, while on the finish the sensations thicken. The zest becomes fresh citron; the apple takes on the form of the rennet variety, perfectly matured. Finish of hazelnut and salt.



92


**Champagne Brut Tradition**  
 DE SOUSA

Chardonnay, Pinot Nero, and Meunier rigorously ordered by percentage. No filtration and a dosage of 7 grams per liter, which during the tasting phase seems to be less. The simple is mostly citrus, with much mandarin, citron, and bergamot, even if the protagonist is the rennet apple: both fresh and slightly oxidized at the same time. Very rigorous, iodized finish.



## WINE RANKING

91



### Champagne Brut Cuis 1er Cru

PIERRE GIMONNET &amp; FILS

*Delicatness is often accompanied by pureness. This cuvée is no exception with 5 vintages obtained only from Chardonnay grapes. A rather low dosage for a brut (8 gr/l), because it is the fruit that has the first word above all else. In the mouth, it never shouts, but instead converses with notes of lily of the valley, white fruit, and salt. Mentholated finish.*



91



### Champagne Brut Special Cuvée

BOLLINGER

*About 20% riserva wines vinified in oak and preserved in magnums plugged with corks. Nose and apple are one in the same. Not boring, because of its nuances: acidic from green apple and soft from quince. In the mouth, a citrusy entrance full of orange, followed by the drier bitter orange and citron, and ending with apple accompanied by pineapples and mandarin.*



91



### Champagne Premier Cru Extra Brut Longitude

LARMANDIER-BERNIER

*Only Chardonnay from municipalities a short distance from the fourth meridian. Longitude extends on the mouth, thanks to very pure fruit and mixing between different crus, the creamy character of Cramant bunches with the sharper and almost austere one of those of the Avize. Fresh citrus, apple in various translations as well as a finish of toasted almond and salt.*



91



### Champagne Brut Nature Grand Cru

BENOÎT LAHAYE

*Almost entirely Pinot Nero that shows its naturalness on the vine. The quest for truth continues in the cellar, as shown by a sip that refuses dosage. Bouquet of yellow flowers, blood orange, cedar, and red fruits (strawberry and currant). Solid mouth, robust but not fat. Very at home on the dinner table.*



91



### Champagne Brut Souverain

HENRIOT

*For the most part Chardonnay. Aromas of citrus, white fruit, and green almond. The element that is best in the mouth, along with a consistent and creamy bubble, is the apple. Around this, alternate the spicy whiffs of star anise and the tempting crunchiness of hazelnut and almond.*



91



### Champagne Brut Réserve

BÉRÊCHE &amp; FILS

*Three vines vinified for the most part in oak with one-third riserva wines. The recipe is similar to that used by many champagnes, including a low dosage, though not too overly so. Its diversity is found in the pointed, long, dry, intensely salty, and even balsamic sip. In such severity, the pleasantness is guaranteed by touches of white fruit. Very good length.*



## WINE RANKING

91

 **Champagne Brut Dis Vin Secret**  
FRANÇOISE BEDEL

Mix of different vintages with that of 2009 having the highest quantity. Five years on the lees. Dense olfactory impact, with mature though not evolved notes. In the mouth, again apple, citrus, candied spices, as well as an intense tropicalness of dehydrated pineapple and mango. Finish of candied ginger. Strong, but not cumbersome.



91

 **Champagne Brut Première Cuvée**  
BRUNO PAILLARD

Multi-cru, about 30 different vineyards, from which arrive three different classic champagne vines; prevalence is given to Pinot Noir. In reality, this label is one of multi-vintage, as the riserva wines, which make up almost 50% of the whole, are a blend of 25 vintages. Juicy sip, big drink and a better balance, with the gift of longevity.



91

 **Champagne Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru**  
R&L LEGRAS

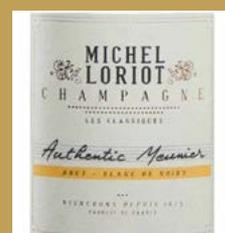
Chardonnay from Grand Cru vines. Chouilly's signature cannot be ignored, as it is dense, personal, and for this reason, recognizable. The soils in which the grapes are grown for this label are similar to those of Chablis: the surface of a sea that once was. The flavor is more so that of the profile which emerges from the glass. The rest is fleshiness of citrus, including the rinds, together with some softer notes of dried fruit. Quite good persistence.



91

 **Champagne Brut Authentique Meunier Blanc de Noirs**  
MICHEL LORiot

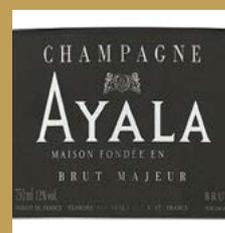
Three vintages together, of which two, 2010 and 2012, were excellent. Despite being dosed at 10 g/l, the fruity character of the Pinot Meunier, a unique variety in this champagne, is never too soft. It reiterates a sip in which the acidity is from red fruits rather than citrus. The delicateness, instead, recalls the plum and pear.



91

 **Champagne Brut Majeur**  
AYALA

After three years resting on the lees, this label is dosed at 7gr/l. Aromas of citrus and white fruit. In the mouth, the dosage seems lower since tart notes of citrus (lime and bergamot) are expressed, as well as an acidity that is in this case, more round from pineapple and wild strawberry. Enthralling drink.



91

 **Champagne Brut Black Label**  
LANSON

On the nose, an interesting floral development that is never overtaken by the apple, raspberry, and citrus sensations that characterize much of the taste. Always present is the delicate flavor that rhymes with the territorial qualities. Smoked finish, but not too long, compensated by a good drinkability.



## WINE RANKING

90

**Champagne Brut Tradition Premier Cru**

GASTON CHIQUET

The base of Pinot Meunier does not signify a wonderful champagne but rather a pleasant one. The vine, flanked by two other typical local varieties, results in a sip that initially expresses a fruity freshness by way of mandarin, raspberry, and apple. The finish of dried fruit and spicy notes gives balance and agility to drink.

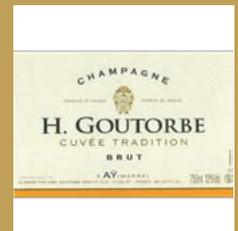


90

**Champagne Brut Cuvée Tradition**

H. GOUTORBE

The Pinot Noir is there and you know it. Noticed in the vinous aspect that still never loses its sense of being champagne, rather preoccupies itself with exhibiting plum, citron, and some red fruit of a varietal mix. It is therefore mass, but not fat or sculpted muscle and never anabolic. Iodized hint at the end.



90

**Champagne Brut R**

RUINART

Aroma of apple, mandarin, and dried fruit. In the mouth, it is rather soft on notes of white fruit, while the citrus, in this phase, takes a step backward with respect to the sensations perceived on the nose, to the benefit of nuances of hazelnut and almond. Only as much flavor as necessary, never seeming too opulent.



90

**Champagne Brut Carte d'Or**

DRAPPIER

Decisive take-off on Pinot Noir. Rich nose, with sensations of apple, spices, and candied citrus. In the mouth, the hotter production zone of the Aube is felt, as the white fruit passes to that of the delicate yellow variety, attributable to the apricot and to tropical touches. Flavor and citrus zest keep the structure at bay.



90

**Champagne Brut Royale Réserve**

PHILIPPONNAT

In prevalence Pinot Nero, dosed at 8gr/l. There are no fireworks to the sound of the excessive as much as eccentric flavor. The same is true for the oxidation, often in today's champagnes, disguised as evolution. Here, there is realistic balance, that of a classic champagne not remaining too long in the bottle and easy to drink.



89

**Champagne Brut Tradition**

JEAN MILAN

Chardonnay from Oger, very direct and endowed with good typical qualities. What does this consist of? A balance that comes from a Chardonnay without excessive acidic edges, but which never lessens the obvious citrus tension, and is never an end in and of itself. Delicious finish of a brioche, as often happens with an Oger Chardonnay. Background flavor.



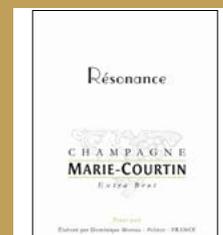
89



## Champagne Extra Brut Blanc de Noirs Résonance

MARIE COURTIN

*From the Aube a champagne with aromas of pyrazine, violet, and red fruit. In the mouth, fruit and citrus take the upper hand revealing an almost overripe side, at times seeming disconnected with respect to that evident flavor that characterizes the sip from mid-mouth and beyond. The duality between ripeness and saltiness resolves on the finish in favor of the latter. Very good persistence.*



**RIGOROUSLY BLIND TASTINGS WERE PERFORMED  
FOR EACH OF THE CHAMPAGNES.**

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CHAMPAGNE NV WINE RANKING BY  
**LUCA GARDINI**

TASTING PERIOD  
**DECEMBER 2016**

