

CHAMPAGNE CUVÉE DE PRESTIGE

TOP 20

Champagne



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:

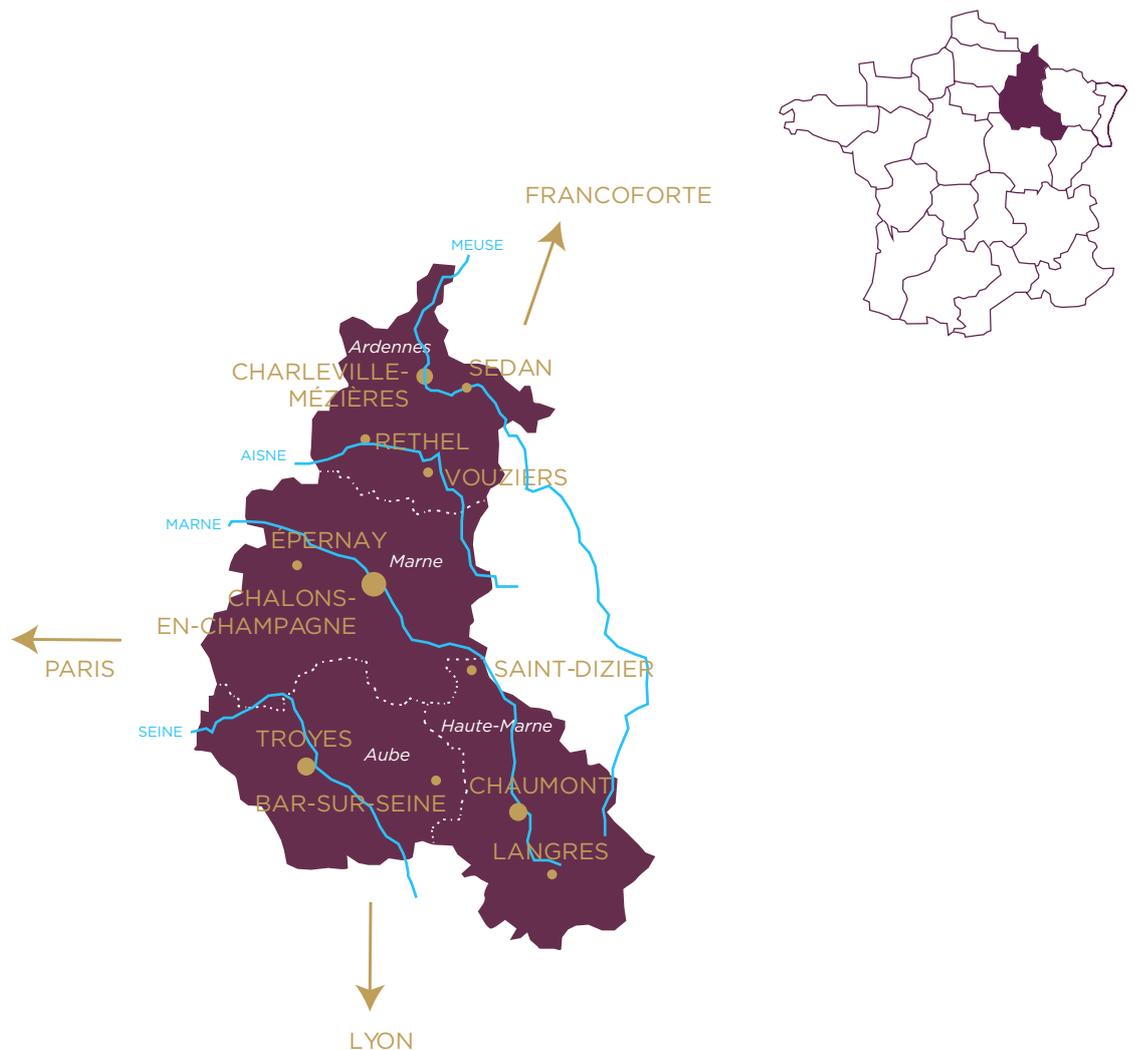
- Absorption of the daytime heat in winter in order to return it to the plants at night.
- Regulation of the distribution of water to the roots during the hot months.
- Characterization of the flavor of the area's wines, contributing to their great flavor.

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.)

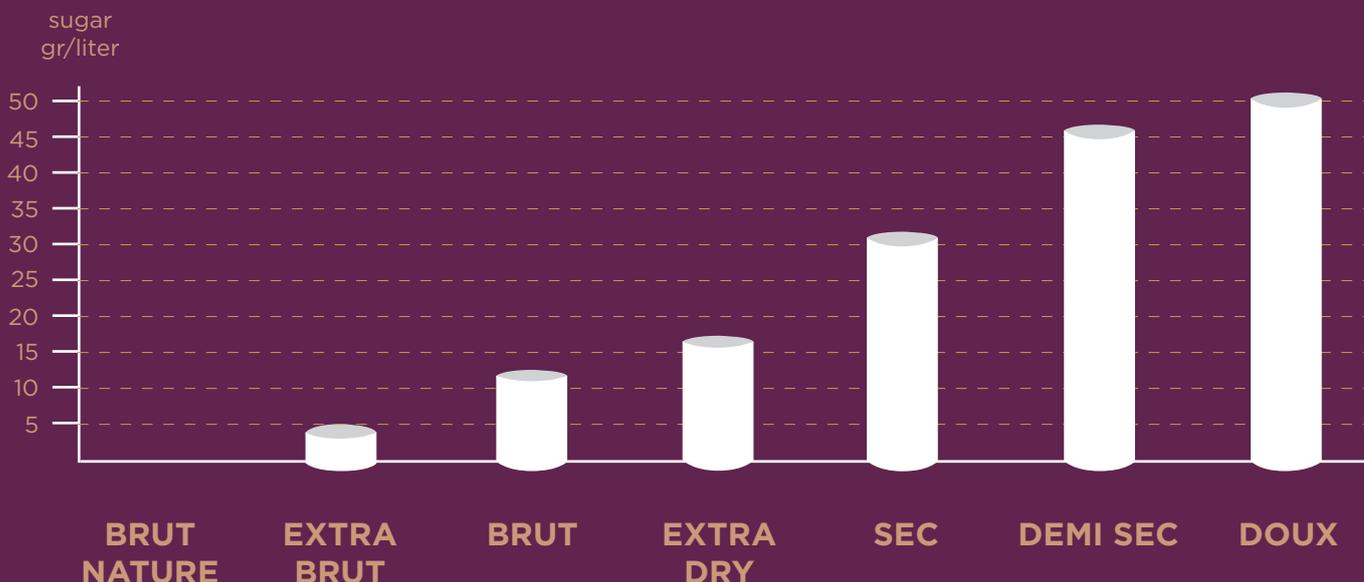
• **Vintage** (all of the grapes used for this type must come from the same year, as that printed on the label.)

• **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.

Cuvée de Prestige

The finest of the regions' products belong to this type. Almost every maison produces their own Cuvée de Prestige. One of the most distinguishing qualities is the sur latte finishing, which may take up to 10 years. These labels may be produced with either one or two varieties of grapes, usually Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, which are not necessarily produced by classified vineyards like Grand Cru. Furthermore, the Cuvées de Prestige bear their production years (though not as a rule), just like the mass-produced ones. These wines are most frequently-produced as brut and extra-brut.

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.

 SHORT (5-8 years)

 MEDIUM (10-15 years)

 LONG (more than 15 years)

97

 **Champagne Sir Winston Churchill Brut 2006**
POL ROGER

The grape blend is a secret, but Pinot Noir dominates. It has a very long finishing period on the lees, which takes place in some of the region's deepest cellars. It has complex yet clean aromas which, even in spite of the hot vintage, are capable of displaying the freshness of bergamot, which is associated with apple and mirabelle plum notes. There's no lack of spiced and sapid notes. An excellent persistence.



97

 **Champagne Brut 2004**
KRUG

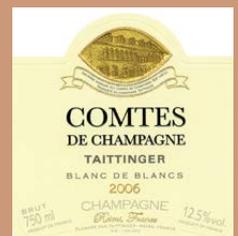
More than 10 years of finishing in wood characterizes this Champagne which aims for power, but never completely exasperates. The aromas are dry initially with hints of oyster and citrus. When left in the glass, the white fruit aromas that mainly characterize the taste emerge. A fulfilling finish, exotically spiced with an iodized sapidity.



96

 **Champagne Blanc de Blancs Comtes de Champagne Brut 2006**
TAITTINGER

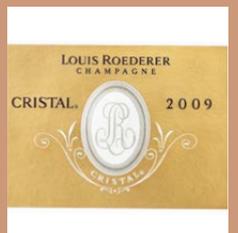
Mainly produced by Grand Cru vineyards. This label's defining quality is its creaminess, which manifests in the nose with a mix of floral sensations, followed by white fruit and hazelnut tones. As for the mouth, following a fruity introduction (mandarin orange and pippin apple), the toasted dried fruit tones lead the palate to a creamy finish, balanced by a very elegant background sapidity.



96

 **Champagne Cristal Brut 2009**
LOUIS ROEDERER

Orange flowers, lemon, and mandarin orange are the leitmotif of a fresh nose, which nearly becomes gluttonous through touches of dried fruit. The citrus returns in the mouth, in addition to drier tones of persimmon and Japanese plum. There's no shortage of complexity, mainly due to mentholated tones, along with a delicate sensation that brings to mind meringue. Very good persistence.



96

 **Champagne Dom Pérignon Brut 2009**
DOM PÉRIGNON

A young nose with orange flower notes, along with a vast array of citrus fruits. Staying in the nose, there's no lack of the sweetest almond notes. In the mouth there's a new zesty tone, even though this phase nevertheless displays a good balance and a texture that combines drinkability and density. Lightly toasted finish.



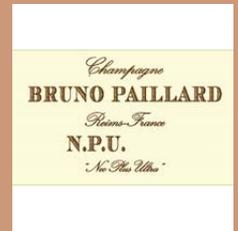
WINE RANKING

96



Champagne N.P.U Extra Brut 2002
BRUNO PAILLARD

The lemongrass and citrus notes in the nose take a decisive turn toward the spirit of more mature sensations in the mouth (2014 disgorgement), which give way to other aspects like white fruit pulp and exotic spices. These latter notes range from balsamic notes to camphorated cardamom, to sweeter but similarly fresh notes of star anise. Blond tobacco undertones in the finish.

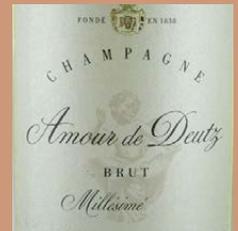


96



Champagne Blanc de Blancs Amour de Deutz Brut 2008
DEUTZ

Apples in stereo in the nose, with great variety and just as many maturation stages, accompanied by a citrus complement of mandarin orange and lime peel. The mouth is initially salty, straightforward, and very slender, though it never becomes truly 'skinny'; the honor belongs to suggestions of white fruit, hazelnut, and spices (coriander and ginger).



96



Champagne Noble Cuvée Brut 2002
LANSON

With a roughly 2/3 prevalence towards Chardonnay, this wine only uses grapes from Grand Cru classified vineyards. Aromas of citrus and white-fleshed fruits, with sweeter hints that recall almonds and, to a lesser extent, pastries (a sensation typical of the Ogier and Grand Cru Chardonnays present in the wine). A taut, salted mouth, which also features a nice horizontality.



95



Champagne Clos des Goisses Extra Brut 2008
PHILIPPONNAT

A light Chardonnay prevalence and maturation that mainly takes place in wood. The recent disgorgement now restores a snapshot of the wine, which is mainly characterized by citrus and white-fleshed fruits. There's no shortage of vanilla, pastry, and almond undertones which are only mere details today but, with adequate time in the bottle, will give it a much stronger sip, the product of the maison's savoir-faire mix and the vintage's character.



95



Champagne Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Cuvée des Caudalies Extra Brut nv
DE SOUSA

The nose contains contradictory but pleasant fruit aromas, with citrus that doesn't even bear the slightest hint of candying, while the pippin apple shows maturity without the slightest hint of oxidation. The mouth, on the other hand, shows greater and ever-fruited rigidity, with a deep vein of acidity and juiciness. This change of pace in terms of the tonalities expressed in the nose gives way to the presence of medicinal and officinal herb tones from mid-sip onward, completed by spiced nuances of coriander and anise.

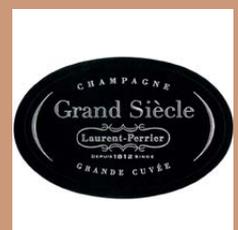


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Champagne Grand Siècle Brut nv
LAURENT-PERRIER

A blend of 3 vintages, taken from Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs that come exclusively from Grand Cru classified villages. Finished on the lees for roughly 8 years. Well-integrated yet structured aromas of white-fleshed fruits and pineapple, with evident almond and star anise notes. The mouth features a citrus attack followed by white-fleshed fruit sensations, completed by effervescent candied ginger tones and more decadent hazelnut notes.



WINE RANKING

95



Champagne Blanc de Blancs VO Extra Brut nv

JACQUES SELOSSE

A blend of several Chardonnay vintages which are matured on the lees for up to around 4 years. Complex and (to a certain extent) unusual aromas for a champagne, but Selosse manages to create unique wines. Other aromas include candied ginger, capers, apple, plum, and spices. The fruit is increased in the mouth through citrus zests. The sip is completed by notes of officinal herbs, honey, and tobacco. (disgorgement July 2016)



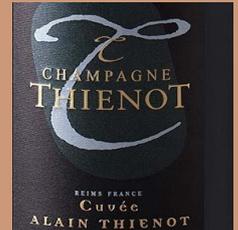
94



Champagne Grande Cuvée Alain Thiénot Brut 2007

ALAIN THIÉNOT

A blend comprised of 2/3 Chardonnay. The vintage decisively favors this variety. Aromas of matured white fruits, sweet citrus fruits, and soft lemon curd touches. A long and juicy mouth, even though it's never characterized by its freshness alone. The sweetness of dried fruit and white fruits is nevertheless balanced by a nice marine vein. Spacious puffs in the sip's finish.



94



Champagne Blanc de Millénaires Brut 1995

CHARLES HEIDSIECK

While waiting for the new vintage (2204), here's a pure Chardonnay that can withstand the time like few others. A rather good vintage that was overshadowed too quickly by the excellent '96. Composed of the 5 Grand Cru villages in the Côte de Blancs and the Vertus Premier Cru. In this mature phase of the wine, the sapidity of Mesnil and Avize emerges in the mouth, which is balanced by the Ogier's creamy pastry tones. The fruit part is composed of candied citrus and apple.



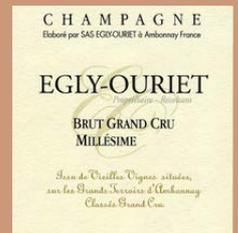
94



Champagne Grand Cru Brut 2007

EGLY-OURIET

Its intense straw color, though very bright, is indicative of the high Pinot Noir percentage. Chamomile, fresh citrus zest, and yellow-fleshed fruit aromas. The mouth is wide, with a great deal of flamboyant fruit tastes—in this case, yellow fruits completed by salted notes and a deep spice profile. Great post-taste persistence.



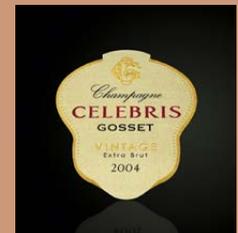
94



Champagne Celebris Extra Brut 2004

GOSSET

The Chardonnay slightly dominates the two grapes that characterize this label. Aromas are evident, though not completely open. The most perceptible ones range from mandarin orange to apple to green almonds. The mouth is ample without losing its elegance. The sip brings to mind apple, pineapple, and yuzu. A creamy finish of yogurt and almonds.



94



Champagne Grand Cru Ambonnay Le Bout du Clos Extra Brut nv

JACQUES SELOSSE

A multi-vintage taken from a mix of wines that, through use of the Solera method, allows them to highlight the terroir's traits. The oxidation style doesn't drain the wine, but rather it fills it with ancillary yet perceptible sensations like menthol and spices. The taste of this wine centers upon sensations of red fruits, bush fruits, and white pepper, in addition to a truly inundating minerality.



WINE RANKING

93



**Champagne Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru
Le Mesnil sur Oger Les Carelles Extra Brut nv**
JACQUES SELOSSE

A producer who has created (or rather, re-created) a way of making and interpreting Champagne. The complex nose gives way to fresh fruit sensations, as well as almost-intense aromas of lily and powdery spices. The mouth has a fruity amount of yellow fruits and citrus, each candied. Not to overlook the very salty extension that accompanies the sip until a very conditioned honey-note finish.

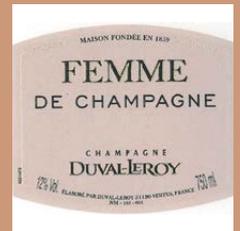


93



Champagne Grand Cru Femme Brut nv
DUVAL-LEROY

Composed of 80% Chardonnay grapes that remain on the lees for six years. Subtle aromas with a good complexity. A touch of Scotchbroom in addition to fruity aromas like peach and pippin apple. The fruit part increases in intensity, but also in relation to the amount of descriptors. A toasted and almost-smoky finish, with puffs of coffee powder.



92



Champagne Belle Epoque Brut 2011
PERRIER JOÛET

Quite a difficult vintage for maturing on the vine, especially for Chardonnays (which represents more than half of this label's blend). Thus, the aroma profile needs to be sought out a little. A juicy mouth of citrus and apples, in this case Granny Smith with touches of salt and thyme. The maison deserves full credit for bringing out the vintage's expressive realism, rather than searching for the elegance that frequently characterizes it.



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CHAMPAGNE CUVÉE DE PRESTIGE
TOP 20
LUCA GARDINI

TASTING PERIOD
DECEMBER 2017

