

CHAMPAGNE

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:

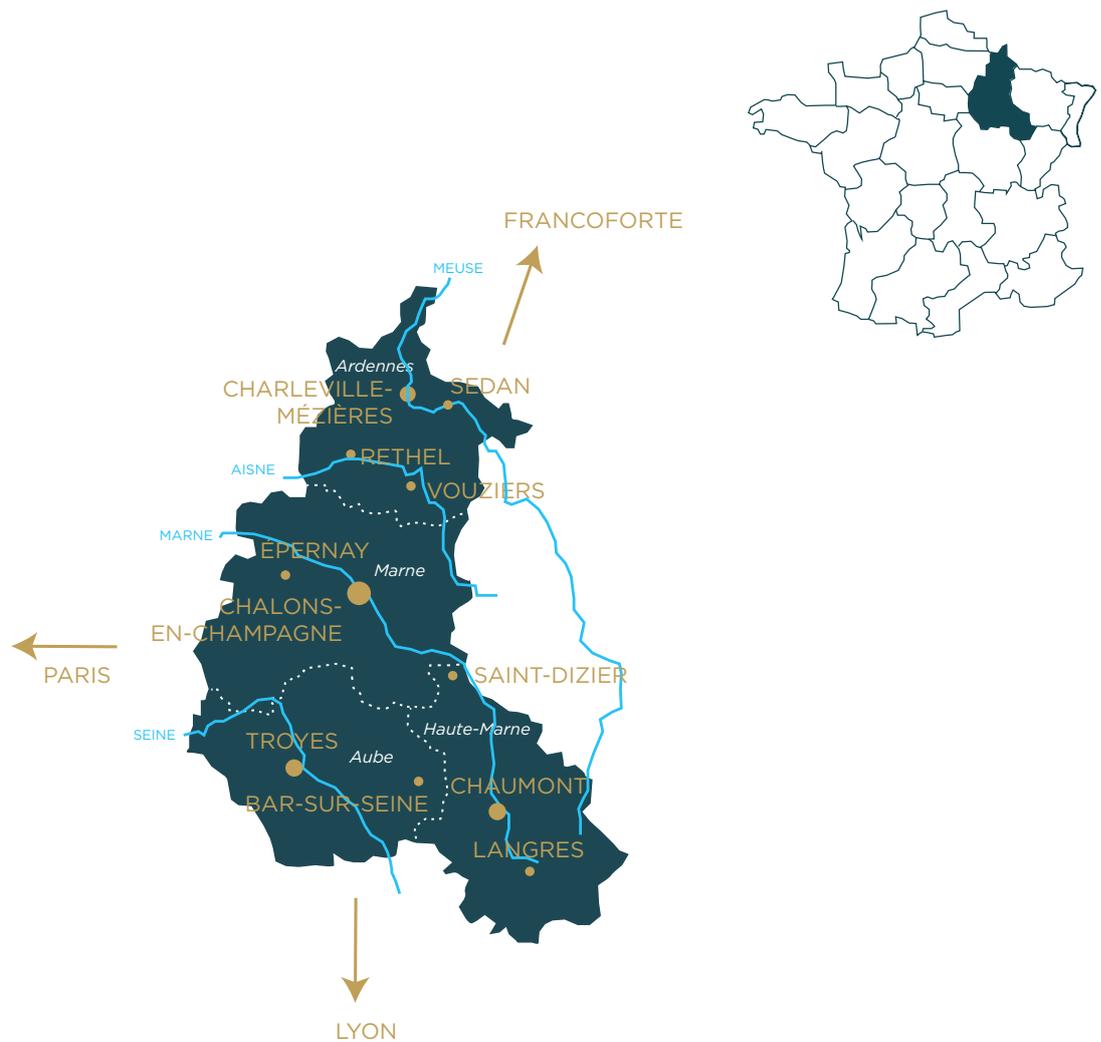
- Absorption of the daytime heat in winter in order to return it to the plants at night.
- Regulation of the distribution of water to the roots during the hot months.
- Characterization of the flavor of the area's wines, contributing to their great flavor.

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:

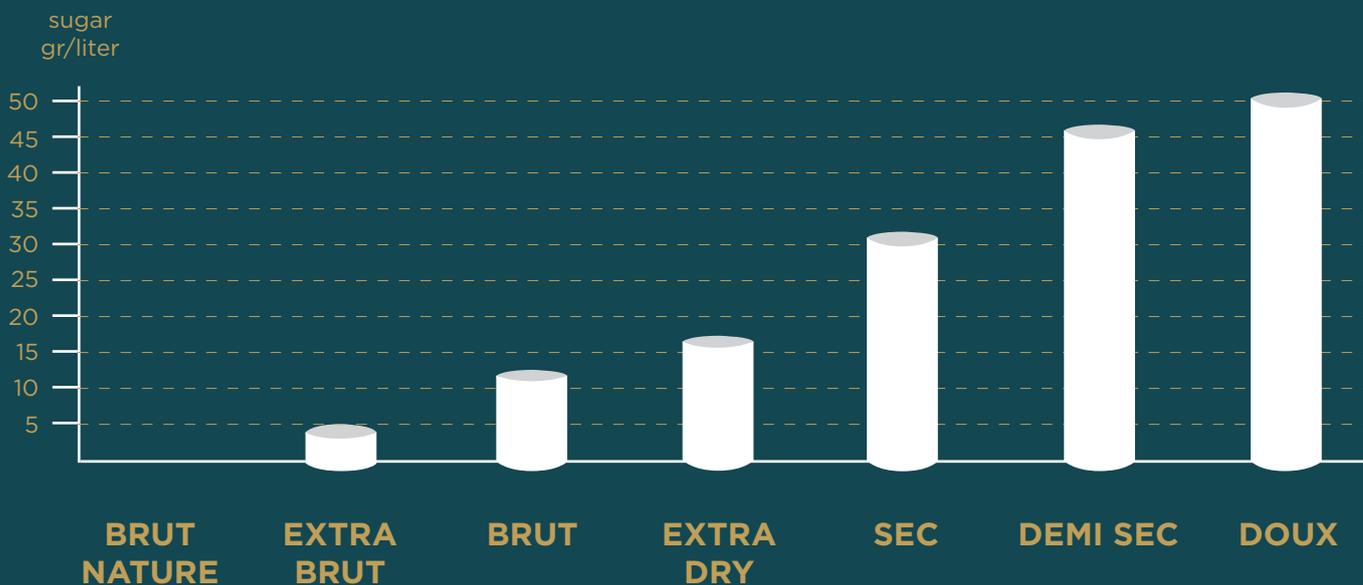
- Cru (80% of total crus)
- Premier Cru (more than 40 small towns)
- Grand Cru (17 villages, two of which are only classified by one vine)

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.

Champagne

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.



SHORT (5-8 years)



MEDIUM (10-15 years)



LONG (more than 15 years)

95



Première Cuvée

BRUNO PAILLARD

At the highest degree of perfection. The Bruno Paillard maison shows its ability to work miracles. Great balance and fineness are due to an over 30 vine variety blend. Vine variety is cherry-picked among Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, with minimal sugar residue and a top secret recipe. It remains on its lees for 36 months to give us a special, romantic sensation. Its nose is captivating, with a light balsamic note and citrus aromas. Its mouthful can show us the ancestral stage. Excellent.



94



Brut Ier

LOUIS ROEDERER

This is a very sharp blend - 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Meunier. Its important citrus-like nose (revealing candied citron and white-pulped fruit flavours) is fresh and breezy. Then, you can feel impressions returning to the mouth. Drinkability: 7.0. Flattering with elder and menthol notes that induce us (and almost force us) to a further tasting.



94



Brut Réserve

PALMER & CO

40 typologies of cru and enough reserve wine which gives roundness and wisdom of years. Then, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier cooperate, each one with its own peculiarities, in this ground-breaking work. Alliance is what enables this fraternal success. Its nose is fragrant and welcoming, with proper smell fatness. It is very large, crunchy, sapid and iodized on the palate, showing a powerful, but not excessive, thread of sourness.



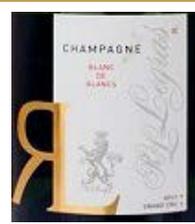
94



Brut Blanc De Blancs Grand Cru

R&L LEGRAS

This is the ideal bottle for who wants to get an idea of Chardonnay's potentiality in pureness, from a name's historical signature. Not only its nose, but also its mouth enhances citrus-like and iodized characteristics. In particular, its great minerality lands, where vine variety mature, are considered to be a point of reference. The nose reveals notes of grapefruit and pineapple with a balsamic aroma, tasting of sea, whereas the mouth enhances a thread of sourness and fierce intensity, with very pleasant fruity roundness.



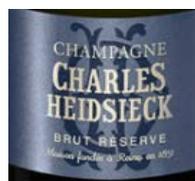
94



Brut Réserve

CHARLES HEIDSIECK

With both undeniable technical capabilities in the assembly stage and excitement at the discovery of the typology's interpretive potentiality. Réserve of Heidsieck is a 60/40/10 blend - the number indicates the basic vintage wines - vins de réserve, and the extra-aging on its lees. The finished product is considered to be like a valuable vertical experience. Its nose of great fineness reveals dry hard-scelled fruit aromas. Exceptionally smooth on the palate.



WINE RANKING

94

Brut Tradition Grand Cru
EGLY-OURIET

¾ Pinot Noir, ¼ Chardonnay. Around 50% wines of reserve. The fermentation - partially in wood - gives considerable complexity, which is difficult to recruit in this type of products. Its nose evokes mature fruit, peach, persimmon flavours and colourful spring flowers' scents. Not only its mouth is agile and flexible, but also thoughtful and wise. Of great persistence.



94

Rosé
RUINART

At the highest degree of perfection. The Bruno Paillard maison shows its ability to work miracles. Great balance and fineness are due to an over 30 vine variety blend. Vine variety is cherry-picked among Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, with minimal sugar residue and a top secret recipe. It remains on its lees for 36 months to give us a special, romantic sensation. Its nose is captivating, with a light balsamic note and citrus aromas. Its mouthful can show us the ancestral stage. Excellent.



93

Black Label
LANSON

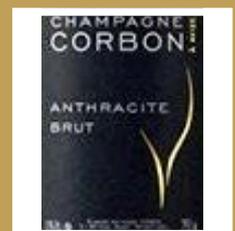
Chef de Caves on shields to put 10 years of blends of various grapes together. Cherry-picked cru, 50% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 15% Pinot Meunier. Delicate perlage, medicinal plants and acacia to the nose. Its mouth is juicy and its finish is surprisingly iodized, of remarkable persistence.



93

Brut
CORBON ANTHRACITE

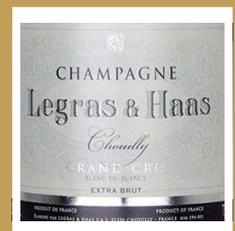
Pinot Meunier (25%) slightly prevailing with respect to the standards, but remaining 60 months on yeasts in bottle. Once you've uncorked it, fruit compactness stands out mostly from tertiary. Exceptionally balsamic and revealing aromas of mature fruit. Its mouthful triggers you, forever. Sapid, fresh, direct, indisputably unique in its own way.



93

Brut Blanc De Blancs Grand Cru
LEGRAS&HAAS

This exceptional product is provided, among other things, with great value for money. Chardonnay deriving from a great cru, coming from Epernay. It makes you perceive herbaceous and balsamic aromas and scents of fresh flowers, locust tree and elder. Its mouth surprises you with abundance and intensity. It is also characterized by the return of balsamic flavour and by a thin thread of sourness.



93

Royale Réserve
PHILIPPONNAT

Line dedicated to ancestors. Grand Cru vine variety and Premier Cru - Ay and Mareuil-sur-Ay on shields. Its assembly provides for 30% wines of reserve aged in barrells. Also, these are annually reassembled. Its nose reveals very aromatic and boisé notes, with a little toasting. Its nice, vigorous mouthful is rich in structure, while the Pinot Noir prevails in a thin texture of red, fragrant fruit, with great persistence.



WINE RANKING

93

 **Réserve Brut**

POL ROGER

Rare cuvée made up of Pinot Noir, Meunier and Chardonnay – wine cellar valued by a special client, sir Winston Churchill. Properly interpreted grapes, also perfectly riped in four years and essential for a nose rich in tertiary. Mediterranean medicinal plants, euphorbia, broom, an exotic fruit character and a very light toasting. Its mouth is energetic, vertical and fresh, with a fade-out due to its pleasant persistence.



93

 **Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs**

BONNAIRE

This product is a Côte des Blancs maison icon with no lack in quality, minerality and freshness. It remained on steel for 9 months and on lees for 36 months. Its nose is provided with candied citrus, orange peel and persimmon notes. It tastes incredibly round and crunchy. Its great sourness enables a long finish persistence.



93

 **Brut “Cuvée Tradition”**

DE SOUSA

Biodynamics in the case of this sparkling wine reaping the benefit of classic fruit, whose impetuosity derives from unpolluted – old – vineyards, worshipping the man-animal relationship. Its pleasantness is due to herbaceous, lemongrass, caper leaves and little yellow flowers' aromas. Then we reach its refreshing mouth, that reveals a proper balance between sourness and minerality. Of pleasant persistence.



92

 **“Longitude” 1er Cru**

LARMANDIER-BERNIER

Fourth meridian vine variety. That is the reason why it was given this name, instead of an ordinary Blanc de Blancs. We are undoubtedly talking about a pure Chardonnay, one of the most mineral Champagnes on trade. Already its nose bewitches you with cut grass, dry hard-shelled fruit and citrus notes. Very tense, crunchy, almost edible in the mouth.

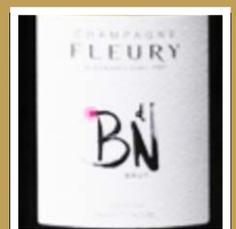


92

 **Blanc De Noirs**

FLEURY

Biodynamic. Of good quality, captivating and fresh. This one represents one of the best maison Fleury expressions. This is a contemplative Pinot Noir of considerable prosperity in its smell, with undergrowth, blueberries aromas and light balsamic and fruity notes. These sensations follow the first tasting, then you can enjoy its pleasantness until an elegant, tenuous and loaded finish.

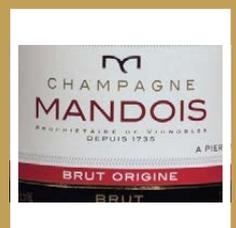


92

 **Brut Origine S.A.**

MANDOIS

Slightly prevailing Chardonnay in this wine that reaps, while assembling, the benefit of three vintage varieties. The outcome is a fragrant product with herbaceous and candied citrus notes. Its variegated mouthful fills you with interest, enhancing a Mediterranean, iodized character.



WINE RANKING

92

Brut Grand Cru
SAINT RÉOL

An Ambonnay maison soft and captivating product. ¾ Pinot Noir, ¼ Chardonnay. Over 36 months of ripening to assure a candied fruit nose with light scents of acacia honey and undergrowth tertiary. Its comforting mouthful is of medium fullness, and it enables a proper, eternally fraternal persistence.



92

Brut Intuition
LEGRAS&HAAS

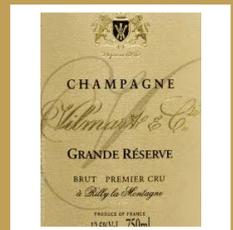
This famous Grand Cru is well-known for its own Chardonnay's minerality. In addition, Pinot Noir and Munier create skillfully a perfect balance. This fascinating wine is, most of all, characterized by a fruity fragrance. Its toasted and fruity nose reveals citrus-like notes, while a fresh, iodized mouth is held by sourness and unavoidable persistence.



92

Grande Réserve
VILMART & CIE

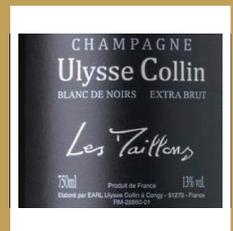
10 month oak foudre. Pinot Noir enchanting and dominating with a little red fruit nose texture and great minerality. It is also provided with the right fragrance and undergrowth, myrtle scents on which euphorbia notes stand above. The mouthful is agile and compact. Of pleasant finish.



92

Les Maillons Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut
ULYSSE COLLIN

This bottle of strong impact is characterized by a 100% Pinot Noir interpretation (40/50 year-old vine varieties) and needs no maceration or filtration. Nothing. Intense nose with light sentors of ribes and blueberry. It tastes full-bodied in the mouth while great elegance and minerality dominate your palate.



91

Brut Souverain
HENRIOT

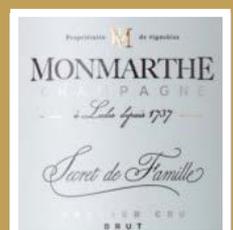
25 types of cru in an (almost) 50/50 Pinot-Chardonnay, with 30% wines of reserve and a clean, valuable "Classic Method" of quality. Elegant, full-bodied and edible, fresh and flowery. During the taste, it is exceptionally elegant, pleasantly crunchy and very creamy, despite a remarkable sourness.



91

Secret de Famille Brut 1er Cru S.A.
MONMARTHE

This little family-run maison creates good value for quality products. Three vineyards are grown in their highest expression in Ludes. Pinot Noir dominates in this fresh Secret of good drinkability and pleasant persistence. Its nose is flowery and also citrus-like, whereas the mouthful is dense, iodized and eternally comforting.



WINE RANKING

91

 **Fleur De Champagne 1er Cru**

DUVAL-LEROY

Pinot and Chardonnay perfectly matching in one of the most “flowery” products on trade, hence the name. Freshly-cut grass, broom, elder notes with a citrus impression given by white-pulped fruit. Its palate seems just the same fresh, properly acid and pleasantly iodized. It follows a remarkable progress in its finish.

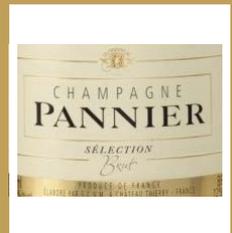


91

 **Brut Sélection**

PANNIER

This Champagne production is based on three grapes' blends from Piccardia. Its nose assures the proper amount of spiciness and piquancy, with little red fruit, ribes and raspberry notes dominating. You can taste its great fatness and an elegant perlage, which both last thanks to an exceptional sourness before getting to the great, resonating finish.



90

 **Authentic Meunier Brut Blanc de Noirs**

APOLLONIS

Impetuous Pinot Meunier 100% displaying a complex range of aromas and flavours of the category. Its fragrant and sweet nose reveals a nice spring blooming, with broom dominance and a great sourness. It is not too abundant on the palate, but it shows its candour and its iodized character with a perfectly clean taste at the end.



90

 **Réserve Brut**

PAUL BARA

Wine cellar of great quality in its whole range of products. We are currently in Bouzy, the heart of Reims Mountain - 100% cru. This Réserve is highlighted by fruit quality, which can be immediately smelled. It follows a balsamic and toasted note and a satisfying mouth, which is of medium broadness and still captivating, salty and sapid.

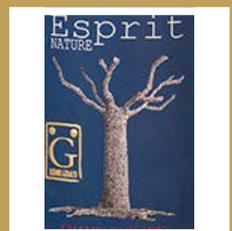


90

 **Esprit de Giraud**

HENRI GIRAUD

This excellent product's Maison is well-known for giving importance to its wines' quality, also during the ripening. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay: 70/30. As you can immediately notice, it has a very simple drinkability. With nice boisé notes and sharp candied citrus aromas, it shows an interesting tertiary note of fresh spices. On the palate, impetus and drinkability comfort do perfectly match.



90

 **Brut Cuvée Royale**

JOSEPH PERRIER

Stainless steel, in bottle for more than 5 years. This is a captivating product without too much overhead. It is mostly made up of Chardonnay in a three vine variety blend, which gives an herbaceous aroma and assures sapidity and good drinkability. Its nose is fresh and “green”, with little white flowers, citrus and white-pulped fruit notes. Its tasting, still remaining full-bodied, is satisfying and refreshing.



89

**Extra Brut**

RÉMI LEROY

¾ Pinot Noir, ¼ Chardonnay. Delicately citrus-like notes are revealed by its nose. However, a nice acid astringency leaves background room for undergrowth balsamic scents, as for euphorbia and caper leaves aromas. Its mouth is nice, iodized and spicy. Its pleasant finish is of average length.



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

All written content 2019 © Luca Gardini
Any unauthorized copying, reproduction, hiring, lending,
public performance and broadcasting is strictly prohibited.

Pg. 01 © Source photo by Shutterstock

Layout and design by **ZeppelinStudio.it**

GardiniNotes.

THE WINE KILLERS

WWW.GARDININOTES.COM

77

APRIL 2019

CHAMPAGNE NV WINE RANKING BY
LUCA GARDINI

TASTING PERIOD
DICEMBRE 2018

