

CHAMPAGNE SPECIAL

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:

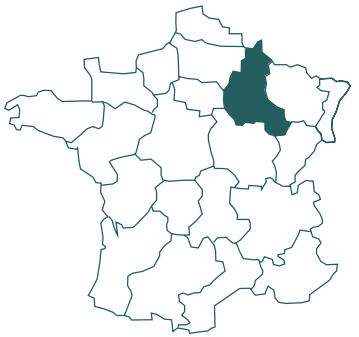
- Absorption of the daytime heat in winter in order to return it to the plants at night.
- Regulation of the distribution of water to the roots during the hot months.
- Characterization of the flavor of the area's wines, contributing to their great flavor.

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.)

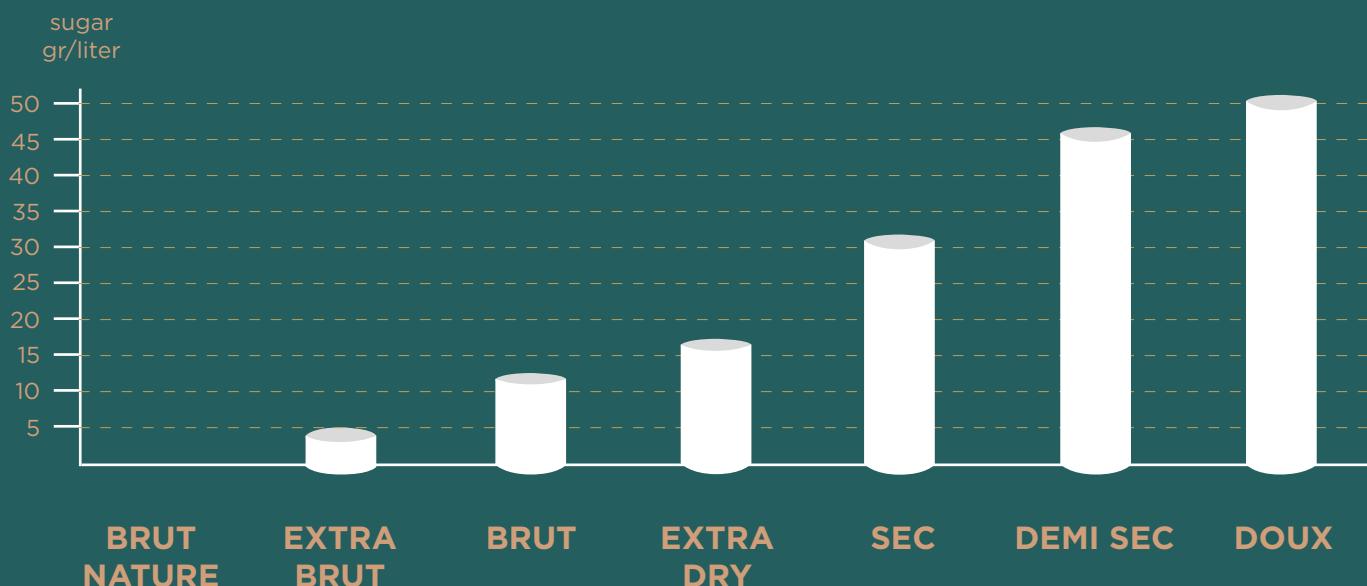
- **Vintage** (all of the grapes used for this type must come from the same year, as that printed on the label.)

- **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.

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)

Champagne NV

Non-Vintage is a classification that is generally produced by combining different vines and vintages, creating the aforementioned cuvée. The NVs do not provide a vintage year on the label. This typology represents more than 90% of Champagne production. The NV can be placed on the market after 15 months, but must spend no less than one year on the lees. Generally, the better maisons do not release their NV Champagne before two or more years. The NVs are subject to all the standard dosages of the denomination. Some Cuvées de Prestige, the highest expression of champagne, are NVs.

92

**Cuvée n°740 Extra Brut n.v**

JACQUESSON

Mix of classic grapes from the region known for long aging "on slats." The vintage of reference is the excellent 2012. Exactly for this reason, the dosage utilized is just over zero. Aromas of citrus zest, rennet apple, and anise. In the mouth, not even the slightest hint of evolution, remaining rigorous but not rigid, more flavorful than acidic.



92

**Cuvée 72 Brut n.v**

BRUNO PAILLARD

The number 72 on the label is explained by 36 months on slats, plus 36 months in cantina after the disgorging. A base of Pinot Nero (partially vinified in barriques). Aromas of citrus and white-fleshed fruit. Noticeable sensations that recall both apple and melon. Juicy mouth, citrus with a good deal of pulp. Spiced background of coriander and star anise.



91

**Les 7 Crus Brut n.v**

AGRAPART & FILS

Almost all Chardonnay. Decisively citrusy aromas, especially on notes of lime and bergamot, alternating with mentholated nuances. In the mouth, these sensations repeat. The sip remains direct, taut, and with a nice length, thanks to a well-noted flavor. Following disgorgement and a couple years of rest, it gains pleasantness.

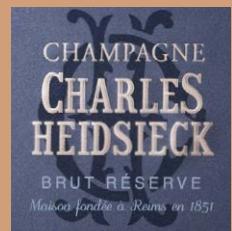


91

**Brut Réserve n.v**

CHARLES HEIDSIECK

Perfect division between three standard, regional vines. Abundant use of reserve wines. The generous dosage is useful to the complex balance of this label. Aromas of apple in various translations, with touches of citrus zest. In the mouth, the proportions between white fruit pulp and citrus demonstrate an almost perfect equilibrium. Good post-sip persistence.



90

**Brut Réserve Grand Cru n.v**

MAILLY

No More than 70% Pinot Nero, the rest Grand Cru. Aromas of apple, yellow fruit, and citrus rind. In the mouth, abundant substance of a fruity mix from the beginning. Towards the finish, a more subtle and citrusy horizontal dimension returns, while not losing that richness that recalls hazelnut.



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)

Blanc de Blancs

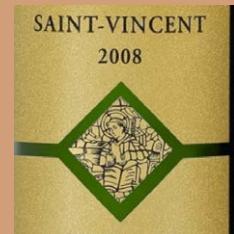
This type uses a base exclusively of Chardonnay. The grapes, from which the Blanc de Blancs is made, come from different territories included in the denomination, even if the best are those from the Côte de Blancs and in part from the Côte de Sézanne and its respective village. This type can be translated into an NV like the Millesimé Vintage or into a Cuvée de Prestige. The Blanc de Blancs are subject to all the standard dosages of the denomination; the most utilized are Extra Brut and Brut.

94

**Blanc de Blancs Saint Vincent Grand Cru Brut 2008**

R&L LEGRAS

Only Chouilly grapes from the oldest parts of the vineyard. Very good vintage that results in a wine that is not too hard as is often common from this village. Complex nose of citrus, translated in a tight manner, granny smith apple, and touches of fresh aromatic herbs. In the mouth, creamy, tapering down to a typically chalky finish.

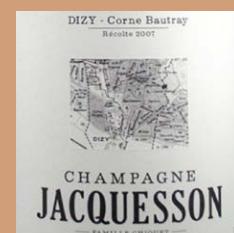


94

**Blanc de Blancs Corne Bautray Dizy 1er Cru Extra Brut 2007**

JACQUESSON

From a vineyard in Dizy, planted in the 1960s, with a discrete quantity of clay. A vintage in which the Chardonnay has reacted well to the humidity, this wine emits aromas of citrus but above all those of white-fleshed fruit. In the mouth, this fruity aspect returns along with exotic tones of pineapple and an almost sea-like, inviting mix of flavors.



94

**Blanc de Blancs Le Mont Aimé 1er Cru Extra Brut 2006**

PASCAL DOQUET

Power and immediacy for this wine produced just below Vertus, on calcareous terrains also rich in silica. This combination confers dynamism, especially in this phase, to a strong, rich wine with fruity notes that emphasize the sweet citruses, tropical fruit, as well as the tonality from nuts. Savory and slightly spicy finish.



93

**Blanc de Blancs Oenophile 1er Cru Pas Dosé 2008**

PIERRE GIMONNET & FILS

No sugar but a lot of taste. Fruit of a very good vintage; grapes from Grand Cru classified vineyards. Aromas of pear, rennet apple, and many sweet citruses, above all mandarin. In the mouth, a creaminess without sugariness. The sweetness is fruity thanks to the perfect ripeness of the grapes. Complexity is guaranteed by salty tones, as well as those of marjoram and mint.



92

**Blanc de Blancs Mycorhize Grand Cru Extra Brut n.v.**

DE SOUSA

Tirage in 2013, with disgorgement in March 2016. First fermentation in barrel. The Avize terroir has rich soils of craye, especially noticeable in the mouth with that flavorful, savory complexity akin to eating oysters. The fruity part, between the nose and mouth, is consistent and has more citrus, whether tart from lime and bergamot or sweeter from mandarin and lemon rind. Excellent persistence.



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)

Blanc de Noirs

This type uses only Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Meunier for the base. The grapes with which the Blanc de Noirs is made can be from different territories included within the denomination. There exist Blanc de Noirs with only Pinot Noir, the best of which are those from the Reims Mountain area and in part the Côte de Bar with its respective village. As well, there are those with only Pinot Meunier (the top ones from the Val-de-Marne) or a blend of the two grapes. The typology can be translated both as NV or as Millesimé Vintage and even as Cuvée de Prestige. The Blanc de Noirs are generally Extra Brut or Brut.

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**Blanc de Noirs Cuvée Garance Brut 2008**

ALAIN THIÉNOT

The aromas are very well balanced, as well as articulated in a precise and clean manner, allowing them to be fully perceived. The same in the sip, which opens on notes of pink grapefruit and rennet apple, and then acquires a slightly more horizontal dimension on tones of nuts, sour cherry, and wild strawberry. Mineral-like from mid-sip and beyond.



94

**Blanc de Noirs Comtesse Marie de France Grand Cru Brut 2005**

PAUL BARA

Only Pinot Noir of a very hot vintage, in steel. This label never loses its equilibrium, notwithstanding the use of only Bouzy grapes, from among the villages of the Pinot Noir, capable of stronger wines. Sip of citrusy take-off, followed by white fruit and some tones of mirabelle. Closes on notes of salt and anise.



91

**Blanc de Noirs Vieilles Vignes Monodie en Meunier Majeur Extra Brut 2008**

APOLLONIS MICHEL LORIOT

Only Pinot Meunier from more than 50-year-old vines. Complex aromas that range from lime to kiwi to quince and tropical fruit. The exotic sweetness from papaya makes itself evident, little by little. Towards the finish, it becomes less excessive thanks to a nice, flavorful verve, and savory finish.



91

**Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut n.v.**

BENOÎT-LAHAYE

Pinot Nero from different areas, with a prevalence of vines classified as Grand Cru. From the glass, emerge fruity notes centered on apple that enrichen with a 'green' vein of aromatic herbs and celery, but also the sweetness of honey. Mouth of more yellow fruit that recalls quince, and persimmon. The green corollary and sweetness remain identical accompanying the sip and a fresh, rather long closing.



91

**Blanc de Noirs Efflorescence Extra Brut 2013**

MARIE-COURTIN

A difficult vintage in which the Aube struggled more than other areas. This notwithstanding, the label is capable of a Pinot Noir that is milder in some ways. Floral and fruity aromas with green aspects from aromatic herbs. In the mouth, fluidity and those fruity tonalities that recall red berries. Closes on evident notes of tamarind and iodine.



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)

Millesimé Vintage

In this typology, the vintage of grapes is imprinted on the label. Here, one finds a snapshot of the vintage itself. If bad, some producers – specifically those that use only their own grapes – choose not to produce the Millesimé Vintage. A champagne can be classified as Millesimé Vintage if it remains “on slats” for at least 36 months. Some maisons however, do not release their Millesimé Vintage on the market for up to four years, or in some cases, ten.

94

**Vintage Brut 2008**

POL ROGER

Base of Pinot Noir with 5 years resting on slats, barrel-free. Fragrant aromas of lemon rind, white-fleshed fruit – peach and apple are evident – with some touches of yeast and spices. The entrance in the mouth is creamy. The lemon rind noticed on the nose is almost candied here, while the notes remain faithful and fresh to white fruit. Flavorful finish with some smoky touches.



94

**La Grande Année Brut 2007**

BOLLINGER

Two-thirds Pinot Nero and the utilization of casks during the first fermentation. Clear aromas of fresh citrus, lemon curd, and rennet. In the mouth, the white fruit part increases and so does the complexity, increased by those spices that give the sip length and multidimensionality. Flavor is present, but a bit in the background.



92

**Grand Cellier d'Or Brut 2012**

VILMART

Composed in great part of Chardonnay, no malolactic fermentation and aged for less than a year in pièces of 228 lt. The nose benefits from the wood, but has no oaky imprint. The sip lengthens from a prevalence of Chardonnay on notes of apple, lemon, and pineapple. On the side, a horizontal dimension of biscuit, candied ginger, and cardamom. Smooth and savory finish.



92

**Premier Cru d'Hautvillers Sous Les Clos Brut 2009**

JOSEPH DESRUETS

Nice vintage notwithstanding a rainy spring, with very appreciable wines as this label demonstrates. Three typical varieties of the region highlight the respective gustative potentials. Nose marked by the yellow fruit of Pinot Meunier and the citrus typical of the Chardonnay. Mouth more of Pinot Nero, with a mix of apple and small, red fruits. Finish of a salty feel with vegetal touches of marjoram.



92

**Ambonnay Grand Cru Brut 2011**

ANDRÉ BEAUFORT

Almost all Pinot Noir from Grand Cru vines. A style that strives to remain loyal with respect to the vintage and the terroir. Aromas of dried flowers, aromatic herbs, citrus zest, and hydrocarbons. The mouth plays on the tri-dimensionality of dry sensations of lavender and aromatic herbs, pulpy notes of yellow fruit and the sweetness of honey and spices.



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)

Rosé

This type is generally produced utilizing either or both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The techniques for rosé champagne production are two: blending or macerating. In the first case, one simply mixes white wine, from one or more varieties, with a percentage of Pinot Noir vinified to red, before fermentation. This method, the most diffuse, improves the color and in part, the flavor of the champagne. The second method, produced using Pinot Noir, calls for a maceration of the skins, usually for a maximum of 72 hours, before the grape pressing. The result in this case gives birth to a more structured champagne. A champagne rosé could be a nv, a millesimé and also a cuvée de prestige.

96



Rosé Cuvée Elisabeth Salmon Brut 2006

BILLECART-SALMON

Half Pinot Noir, half Chardonnay. The hot vintage on one hand does not take away grace or elegance from this wine; on the other hand, it makes the spectrum of sensations straightforward and tight. Minutia, especially on the nose of nuts, dried flowers, and some toasted hints, but most evident, is a rich, fruity panorama in which mandarin zest, raspberry, plum, and pomegranate preserves, stand out on the nose and in the mouth.



95



Rosé La Grande Année Brut 2005

BOLLINGER

Very hot vintage. For this rosé blend, almost all Grand Cru grapes with red from an old vine of Ay. Intense aromas of tamarind, blood orange, red fruit, and mandarin zest. In the mouth, more vinous without excessive body. The dominant sensations are those of citrus, even candied. Finish of raspberry jam and dry mint.



94



Rosé Brut 2008

POL ROGER

A base of Pinot Noir partially vinified as a red, from Bouzy, Ambonnay, and Cumières grapes. Aromas of orange, mandarin, and pink grapefruit. In the mouth, the citrus bolsters the sip, and notable sensations of fresh, wild strawberry and jammy raspberry. Never too vinous, thanks also to a nice, flavorful imprint.



93



Rosé Prestige 1er Cru Brut n.v.

DUVAL-LEROY

Grape blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Floral attack of rose along with a greener suggestion that recalls geranium. Nuances of red berries on the nose. In the mouth, a juicy take-off from currants and raspberry, becoming even more so from mandarin zest and wild strawberry. A richer closing on sensations of fresh cherry.



93



Rosé Special Club Grand Cru Brut 2012

PAUL BARA

Rosé from a mix with more than 60% Pinot Noir. This vintage, which many have deemed excellent, does not disappoint. In the mouth, take-off on alternation between pink grapefruit and raspberry. A berry-citrus duo follows with wild strawberry and bitter orange. Closing with sweet hints of rhubarb. Savory background with light spiced touches of cinnamon.



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CHAMPAGNE RANKING BY
LUCA GARDINI

TASTING PERIOD
OCTOBER 2017

