

CHAMPAGNE

FROM CELLAR TO TABLE

VIGNERONS ET MAISONS



CHAMPAGNE: from cellar to table

Photo credits: Cover Fabrice Leseigneur; pages 4-5: Jean-Philippe Balte/Sipa Press, Pierre Thomas/Sipa Press; pages 6-7: Yvon Monet, Michel Guillard, Jean-Marie Lecomte; pages 8-9: Alain Cornu, Gérard Rondeau, Fulvio Roiter; pages 10-11: Gérard Rondeau, Daniëlla Hendrickx, Alain Cornu, Fabrice Leseigneur; pages 12-13: Fabrice Leseigneur, Daniëlla Hendrickx, John Hodder, Yvon Monet; pages 14-15: Alain Cornu, Jean-Charles Gutner, Yvon Monet, Philippe Exbrayat; pages 16-17: Alain Cornu, Visuel Impact; pages 18-19: Herald Peirera, Daniëlla Hendrickx; pages 20-21: Jean-Philippe Balte/Sipa Press, Herald Pereira, Kumasegawa, Daniëlla Hendrickx, Patrick Guérin, Visuel Impact, Jean-Marie Lecomte; pages 22-23: Pierre Thomas/Sipa Press, Alain Cornu, illustration by Patrice Caumon and Gilles Cenazandotti; pages 24-25: Philippe Exbrayat, Daniëlla Hendrickx; pages 26-27: Philippe Exbrayat, Jean-Philippe Balte/Sipa Press, Daniëlla Hendrickx, Pierre Thomas/Sipa Press; pages 28-29: Alain Cornu; page 30: Jean-Philippe Balte/Sipa Press, Visuel Impact, Jean-Marie Lecomte; pages 32-33: Fotolia - Graphic design, layout and printing: Alliance PG Reims, English translation: Flo Brutton, Printed in France, December 2014, Comité interprofessionnel du vin de Champagne, All rights reserved ©CIVC.



CHAMPAGNE

FROM CELLAR TO TABLE

CONTENTS

- 4-5** · THE DIVERSITY OF CHAMPAGNE WINES
- 6-7** · THE ROOTS OF DIVERSITY
- 8-9** · CHOICE OF WINEMAKING TECHNIQUE
- 10-11** · BLENDING
- 12-13** · ROSÉ CHAMPAGNE
 - 14** · MATURATION PERIOD (AGING)
 - 15** · DOSAGE
- 16-19** · HOW TO CHOOSE CHAMPAGNE
- 20-21** · HOW TO SERVE CHAMPAGNE
- 22-25** · HOW TO TASTE CHAMPAGNE
- 26-27** · PAIRING CHAMPAGNE WITH FOOD
- 28-29** · HOW TO STORE CHAMPAGNE
 - 30** · THINK PLEASURE, THINK PARTIES, THINK CELEBRATION – THINK CHAMPAGNE
 - 31** · TASTING SHEET
- 32-33** · AROMA DEVELOPMENT IN CHAMPAGNE WINES
- 34-35** · GLOSSARY

THE DIVERSITY OF CHAMPAGNE WINES



The Champagne appellation is unique but the wines themselves are different every time. Different vineyards, different plots and different grape varieties; different vintages, different blends and different aging periods – with so many subtle variations in play, there are almost as many wine styles in Champagne as there are Champagne winemakers. The result is an array of wines to suit every taste, every circumstance and every dish.

No wine is as versatile as Champagne – whether you are enjoying a relaxed drink with friends or toasting a victory. Birthdays, New Year festivities, romantic dinners for two, wedding receptions – when there is something worth celebrating, Champagne is always the first choice.





THE ROOTS OF DIVERSITY

The two factors that give Champagne its diversity are terroir and winemaking technique. By terroir we mean the sum total of all those natural and human influences that play a part in grape growing.

There are the natural forces at work in the vineyard: soil, subsoil, vine orientation, macroclimate and microclimates; and there are the choices made by individual growers in terms of grape variety, rootstock, vine training and even harvesting. The Champagne appellation embraces some 280,000 vineyard plots in 320 villages (crus). Each has specific features that make for quite different characteristics in the wines.





Which brings us to winemaking technique. Wine does not happen by accident. It reflects the handiwork of its maker, whose personal technique depends on the style of wine he or she has in mind. How to press the grapes and rack the juice; how much yeast to add; at what temperature to conduct fermentation; whether or not to let the wine undergo malo-lactic fermentation; whether to ferment in steel tanks or wooden vats.

Decisions like these all leave their mark on the wines. They also influence the composition of each blend, the period of aging and the level of 'dosage'.



CHOICE OF WINEMAKING TECHNIQUE

Champagne production, from grape growing to winemaking, is a very tightly regulated process – but not at the expense of individual creativity. Producers and cellar-masters are free to make the most of Nature’s bounty – free to produce wines that make them proud.

To Malo or not to Malo

Alcoholic fermentation is an essential part of the winemaking process. Malolactic fermentation however is largely optional. Most Champagne makers favour it, though not necessarily for all wines, but some of them do not.

Malolactic fermentation, if desirable, comes after alcoholic fermentation, driven by specific bacteria that convert malic acid to lactic acid. The process reduces and softens the acidity in the wine, producing a more complex nose with hints of buttery brioche and a creamy, dairy roundness. Wines that have not undergone MLF tend to retain their floral/fruity character for longer, remaining typically sharper and more acidic.



Whether to ferment in wood or steel

Prior to the 20th Century, all Champagne wines were fermented in wooden vessels, usually oak barrels with a 205-litre capacity called 'pieces champenoises'.

A few producers still ferment their wines in oak but most prefer the inert, neutral environment of a stainless steel vat. Wood by contrast does interact with the wine, in two important ways. The wood itself contributes compounds that add to the wine's bouquet, introducing oaky, vanilla, and sometimes toasty flavours. Wood also breathes, exposing the wine to a constant, tiny quantity of oxygen that softens and fattens up the fruit.



BLENDING

10



By combining wines with different sensory characteristics, the Champagne maker looks to create a 'cuvée' that is distinctly more than the sum of its parts. Blending is in many ways the highpoint of winemaking, creating a sense of balance that is not found naturally – a quality that is only acquired by human intervention. The resulting 'cuvée' is a personal masterpiece, composed by the cellar-master or grower from the virtually endless permutations available to them. The ultimate objective is the same today as it has always been: to create a Champagne that, vintage after vintage, expresses and perpetuates each individual winemaker's particular vision and style.

Most Champagne is blended wine. Not only a blend of three different grapes (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier) but also a blend of wines from different villages and different vintages – the so-called 'vins de réserve' (reserve wines) that may account for more than 50% of the final blend.

Reserve wines are the wines held over from previous vintages, some of them dating back several decades. These are wines matured at low temperatures in wood or steel tanks, or sometimes in the bottle. They are tasted regularly to assess their development.

If a white Champagne is made exclusively from light-skinned grapes (Chardonnay), it is labelled as 'Blanc de Blancs'. If made exclusively from



black-skinned grapes (Pinot Noir and/or Meunier) it is labelled as '**Blanc de Noirs**'.

In truly exceptional years worthy of commemoration, the winemaker may decide to release a **vintage** Champagne – a wine made exclusively from the grapes grown in that year.

A '**Prestige cuvée**' is a producer's flagship Champagne – a wine that stands as a benchmark for the other bottlings in the producer's portfolio. Vintage or non-vintage, these wines are made from the cream of the crop and are usually released in specially designed bottles.



Meunier



Pinot noir



Chardonnay



ROSÉ CHAMPAGNE

Rosé Champagne is made by maceration, 'saignée' or by the blending of red and white wines.

In the maceration method destemmed black-skinned grapes are left to macerate in a tank until the desired colour has leached out of the skins and into the juice (24-72 hours).

In the 'saignée' method a small portion (10-15%) of juice is bled off ('saignée') after 24-72 hours from black-skinned grapes that are undergoing extended maceration for red wine production. This pink fraction then goes through the secondary fermentation in the bottle.



Making the red wine used in rosé production.



In the blending method - by far the most widely used in Champagne - a small amount of still, red wine from Champagne (5-20%) is added to an otherwise white blend prior to bottling. The resulting rosé wine then goes through the secondary fermentation in the bottle.



MATURATION PERIOD (AGING)

14

Champagne maturation is a long and complex process.

Immediately after bottling ('tirage') every 'cuvée' must spend at least 15 months in the cellar - this is the legal minimum for non-vintage Champagne. For vintage Champagne, the minimum is three years. In practice, non-vintage wines are generally aged for 2-3 years prior to disgorgement, vintage wines for 5-10 years or more.

It is in the course of cellar maturation that secondary fermentation occurs. This is the process that transforms still wine to sparkling wine - hence the name *prise de mousse*, literally 'capturing the sparkle'. Aging does not stop there of course, but continues through two important chemical reactions.

The first is autolysis: the enzymatic self-destruction of yeast cells, liberating substances that in turn favour the development of tertiary aromas. These are

the classic bottle-aged characteristics of Champagne wines, typified by notes of leather, tobacco and candied fruit.



The second is an exchange of gases - carbon-dioxide for oxygen - facilitated by the special 'tirage' stopper, which is usually a crown cap but sometimes a cork. Because the seal is not perfectly airtight, it allows a low rate of gas exchange that has significant consequences for the sensory characteristics of the wine.

Champagne continues to evolve after disgorgement (expulsion of the lees). Indeed, helped by addition of the 'liqueur d'expédition' at the 'dosage' stage, the wine will continue to evolve until the bottle is opened.

DOSAGE

Immediately after disgorgement the bottle is topped up with a 'liqueur d'expédition' (mixture of cane sugar and wine) which quantity varies according to the style of Champagne (dry, medium or sweet).

The 'liqueur d'expédition' is the final and definitive touch given to a winemaker's composition before shipping and labelling. Champagne may be dosed with the same wine as the bottle holds (to bring out the character of the grapes, vineyard, etc) or another wine altogether - it all depends on the style of Champagne that the winemaker has in mind. Reserve wines for instance, especially when aged in wood, can add a whole new dimension to the tasting experience.



HOW TO CHOOSE CHAMPAGNE

16



The Champagne labelling (label, back label, neck label) requires the following mandatory information: the word 'Champagne' ; the level of sweetness (whether brut, sec, demi-sec, etc); the percentage of alcohol by volume (% vol); the bottle capacity (l, cl or ml); the brand of Champagne; the name of the producer; the name of the commune where that producer is registered and the country of origin (France); the producer's registration code; the batch code; the words 'produce of France'; the allergen content; the warning about drinking during pregnancy.

Producer information

Every label must display the producer's registration code issued by the Comité interprofessionnel du vin de Champagne (Comité Champagne), preceded by two initials indicating the category of producer:

- NM** **Négociant Manipulant.** An individual or company, with or without vines of their own, buying grapes, grape must or wine to make Champagne on his/her own premises.
- RM** **Récoltant Manipulant.** Grower who makes and markets own-label Champagne from grapes exclusively sourced from his/her own vineyards.
- RC** **Récoltant Coopérateur.** Co-op grower who sells, under his/her own label, a partly or totally co-op produced Champagne.
- CM** **Coopérative de Manipulation.** Wine co-op that markets Champagne made on co-op premises from members' grapes.

- SR** **Société de Récoltants.** A family firm of growers that makes and markets own-label Champagne from grapes sourced from family vineyards.
- ND** **Négociant Distributeur.** Distributor who buys in finished bottles of Champagne then labels them on his/her own premises.
- MA** **Marque d'Acheteur.** Buyer's own-brand Champagne.

Level of sweetness

Every label must state the type of wine as defined by residual sugar content measured in grams of sugar per litre (g/l): Brut, less than 12 g/l; Demi-Sec, 32-50 g/l; Sec, 17-32 g/l; Extra Dry, 12-17 g/l; Doux, more than 50 g/l; Extra Brut, 0-6 g/l.

Brut Nature, Pas Dosé or Dosage Zero contains zero dosage and less than 3 grams sugar per litre.





Optional information on labels

Blanc de blancs: indicates a Champagne exclusively made from light-skinned grapes, typically Chardonnay but sometimes much rarer, ancient cultivars, used alone or in combination (Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Arbane and Petit Meslier, which together represent just 0.3 % of plantings).

Blanc de noirs: indicates a Champagne exclusively made from black-skinned grapes (Pinot Noir and/or Meunier).

Year of harvest: indicates a vintage ('millesimé') Champagne, exclusively made from the fruit produced in the year displayed on the label and containing no reserve wines. The year of harvest is also displayed on the cork.

Grand Cru or Premier Cru: indicates a wine exclusively produced from vineyards holding Grand Cru status (17 villages) or Premier Cru status (42 villages).

Miscellaneous technical details may also be displayed on the back label or wine bottle medallion (the varietal composition of the blend, the vineyard or named vineyard plot of origin, date of disgorgement, etc.).

Bottle styles

In the 19th Century the classic Champagne bottle was joined by a wide variety of bottle formats – bottles with biblical-sounding names of obscure origin, designed to capture the spirit of any and every festive occasion.





The design of the Champagne bottle is born out of necessity – the need to withstand high pressure and repeated handling. All other things being equal, this leaves room for subtle variations in style, some new, some inspired by ancient bottle shapes. Champagne wines are typically bottled in dark green or sometimes amber glass, with the notable exception of rosé Champagne, which comes in clear glass bottles. All Champagne wines must be sold in the bottle in which they underwent second fermentation – whether this is a jeroboam or a half bottle.

Quarter	20 cl
Half bottle	37.5 cl
Medium (or Pinte)	50 cl
Standard bottle	75 cl
Magnum	1.5 litres (2 bottles)
Jeroboam	3 litres (4 bottles)
Rehoboam	4.5 litres (6 bottles)
Methusalah	6 litres (8 bottles)
Salmanasar	9 litres (12 bottles)
Balthazar	12 litres (16 bottles)
Nebuchadnezzar	15 litres (20 bottles)
Salomon	18 litres (24 bottles)
Souverain	26.25 litres (35 bottles)
Primat	27 litres (36 bottles)
Melchizedec or Midas	30 litres (40 bottles)

Impact of bottle size on wine aging

As we saw earlier, gas exchange – carbon dioxide for oxygen – is an important factor in the aging of Champagne. This is made possible by the special *tirage* stopper, usually a crown cap, which allows small amounts of oxygen to enter the bottle and small amounts of CO₂ to escape – in other words, the seal is not perfectly airtight. However, since the neck size is the same for a magnum, standard bottle or demie, the ratio of air to wine will be smaller in a magnum and greater in a demie. Relative to a standard bottle, Champagne will therefore age more slowly in a magnum and faster in a demie.

Disgorgement

Following the oxidative shock of disgorgement, dosage allows the Champagne to age smoothly in the 2-3 month post-disgorgement phase when all of the oxygen introduced at disgorgement must be consumed so as to restore the balance required for longevity.

Champagne wines, whether disgorged or not, may need years and sometimes decades to reveal themselves in all their glory. Disgorgement produces wines of equal quality but with quite different aromatic profiles depending on how recently they were disgorged.



HOW TO SERVE CHAMPAGNE



The glass

Champagne is best enjoyed in a tulip glass: tall and bulbous enough to allow the bubbles to develop to the full but narrowing at the top so as to concentrate the bouquet. The saucer-shaped Champagne coupe is to be avoided.

Wash Champagne glasses by hand with hot water only, never soap or detergent. Gently wipe dry, aiming to safeguard all those natural imperfections in the glass that make for a proper show of bubbles and a fine, persistent ring on the surface of the wine.

Temperature

The ideal serving temperature is 8-10°C. Champagne is best chilled by placing the bottle in a bucket filled with ice and water for 20 minutes, or in the refrigerator for several hours.





Chilling Champagne in the freezer

Contrary to popular belief, freezing Champagne will not ruin its flavour. But you might shatter the bottle if you leave it in the freezer for too long. The safe maximum is 30 minutes at -18 °C (the temperature of a domestic freezer).



Shape of the cork

Champagne corks change from straight to mushroom-shaped as they age, gradually becoming more peg-like in older bottles that have been cellared on their sides. This change in shape has no bearing on the quality of the wine.



The Champagne teaspoon myth

Placing a metal teaspoon in the neck of a Champagne bottle: does it help to preserve the effervescence? No, say researchers at the Comité Champagne, who in 1994 debunked the myth after exhaustive testing involving a great many samples and teaspoons ...

How to open a bottle of Champagne

Start by removing the foil wrapping (pull on the tab if there is one). Now hold the cork down firmly with one hand and tilt the bottle away from you (and others). Then untwist the wire loop at the base of the muzzle.

Next, still holding the cork firmly, gently rotate the bottle with your other hand so that the cork comes sliding (not popping) out.

The cork should display the word 'Champagne' and where relevant the year of vintage.

Pouring Champagne

Never fill the glass more than two thirds full, so leaving space for the aromas to unfold. Leave the wine to open in the glass for a moment, giving it time to reveal the full richness of its bouquet. It is then best to drink the bottle without delay, since Champagne will start to go flat within a few hours of opening.



HOW TO TASTE CHAMPAGNE



Tasting Champagne follows the same principles as the tasting of any wine. Except that in this case all five senses come into play: sight, smell, touch, taste and – because of the effervescence – hearing too.

Hearing

First there is the unmistakable pop or hiss of the Champagne cork, then a crackling, fizzing sound as the wine is poured – the sound of bubbles bursting then jostling as they make their way to the surface. If you listen carefully you can hear them popping as they reach the top.

Sight

First there is the captivating spectacle of the bubbles themselves – endlessly fascinating as they rise irrepressibly to the surface and gather in a jostling ring.

Look carefully and you will notice that the bubbles always rise from the same points in the glass – the so-called ‘nucleation sites’. These are particles in the wine or on the glass itself that trap a bubble of carbon dioxide as the wine is poured. That bubble then grows as more dissolved carbon dioxide collects inside it, eventually reaching the critical size required to break free and rise to the surface of the wine. Another bubble then forms in its place, so producing a string of tiny bubbles that rise at the rate of 10-20 per second.

When these bubbles burst at the surface, they release clouds of aromatic molecules into the air – micro droplets of wine known as Champagne aerosols.



Then there is the visual impact of the wine's colour: yellow green for Champagne that is predominantly based on Chardonnay; yellow with pink highlights for a wine mostly made from black-skinned varieties; burnished gold for older wines.

The colour spectrum for rosé Champagne is broader still, extending from pale pink (*œil-de-perdrix*, literally 'partridge eye') through deep pink and all the way to tawny in the case of older Champagne. The depth of colour very much depends on the composition of the blend.



Size and number of bubbles in the glass

Bubble size is determined more by the glass than by the Champagne itself, starting with the nucleation site where the bubble is born. After a bubble is released from its nucleation site, it grows as it makes its way to the surface, gradually swelling as the dissolved carbon dioxide diffuses into it. The longer the journey to the top, the bigger the bubble on arrival, particularly with the high carbon dioxide levels typical of young Champagne wines. The older the Champagne, the lower the CO₂ level and the finer the bubble.

As for the number of bubbles, this remains largely supposition. Based on an average bubble diameter of 0.5mm and an average CO₂ content of 12g per litre, then every 10cl Champagne glass theoretically contains some 11 million bubbles. But then, most of the carbon dioxide (80%) actually escapes at the surface without generating any bubbles at all ...





Smell and taste

Smell and taste go hand in hand when enjoying Champagne, experienced first through ortho-nasal olfaction (sniffing) then by retro-nasal olfaction (the perception of odours from inside the mouth). The four primary tastes – salty, sweet, acid and bitter – are perceived by taste receptors on the tongue.

The bubbles in Champagne add an extra level of complexity, heightening our perception of the flavours that reach the nasal mucosa. Leaving the Champagne to breathe in the glass for a few moments allows those flavours to materialise.

To understand the world of Champagne wines, we have to consider the two distinct dimensions that account for their diversity. One is linked to the vineyards. The other is linked to the aging process (see pages 32 and 33).

The diversity of Champagne wines starts with the vineyard and more particularly with the different grape varieties planted in different terroirs. The primary aromas are specific to the grape varieties and show up in the young wines.

The Chardonnay (in common with the Arbane, Petit Meslier, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris) produces wines with notes of white flowers (hawthorn, honeysuckle, lime flower, acacia, jasmine, orange blossom), citrus (grapefruit, lemon) and exotic fruits (litchi, pineapple). Some wines also present aromas of apple, pear and a hint of spice (aniseed, ginger) or mint. Most feel light and airy on the palate, with a lively edge and that flinty, chalky expression that is typical of wines from chalk terroirs – something wine lovers call minerality.

The Pinot Noir and Meunier impart notes of yellow fruits (peach, apricot, plum, Mirabelle plums), soft berry fruits (strawberry, cherry, sometimes with a hint of blackberry or blueberry), citrus (mandarin, orange) and exotic fruits (mango, passion fruit). Add to these a floral edge (rose, peony, violet) and the occasional touch of spice (cinnamon, cloves) and you have the ideal bouquet to bring



roundness to the finished Champagne – softer and smoother in the case of the Meunier, fuller and more powerful in the case of the Pinot Noir.

The blending process combines these different aromas in seemingly endless permutations, producing complex wines. The primary aromas, coming from the grapes, are then completed by secondary aromas that come from the fermentation. Ultimately, every decision a producer makes along the way, from pressing through to final ‘dosage’, has an effect on the style of the finished Champagne.

The addition of reserve wines (accounting for up to 50% of some non-vintage ‘cuvées’) takes us into the second dimension of diversity: the process of maturation and aging and how it encourages the development of the so-called tertiary aromas.

In the early stages of maturation (3-10 years), the fruit aromas evolve first towards notes of brioche, Danish pastry and ripe, stewed fruits, then towards scents of dried fruits (figs, dates, raisins) and dried flowers. The bouquet grows increasingly nutty, with hints of almonds, hazelnuts, Virginia tobacco, beeswax, honey, milk toffee – plus a slight hint of vanilla and liquorice in oak-aged wines.

Older, fully mature wines (aged for at least 10 years) exhibit more evolved notes ranging from fruit jelly (especially quince) and gingerbread to undergrowth aromas

and toasty nuances of mocha plus freshly roasted coffee and cocoa beans (the so-called empyreumatic flavours).

Rosé Champagne may offer fresh aromas of citrus or wild strawberries, succulent aromas of ripe, soft fruits or red berries, or a complex bouquet of wild berries and undergrowth scents. The palate may be firmly structured, powerful and fleshy or much lighter in character. With age, the aromas take on the richness of dried fruits and spices, becoming increasingly toasty with each passing year.



PAIRING CHAMPAGNE WITH FOOD

Champagne is an *aperitif par excellence*, but with a range of aromas and flavours that make it easy to pair with almost any dish. Exceptions are vinaigrette-dressed salads, hot and spicy foods and chocolate. Otherwise, bubbly goes well with just about everything, from starter, through main dish to dessert.





The permutations are endless – but here are a few suggestions.

DISH	PREPARATION	CHAMPAGNE
Caviar	<i>Au naturel</i>	Blanc de Blancs Brut Vintage
Seafood: oysters, lobster, sea urchins	<i>Au naturel</i> or in aspic	Brut Nature mainly from Chardonnay, or Brut Blanc de Blancs
Seafood: crayfish, langoustines, scallops	<i>Au naturel</i> or poached	Blanc de Blanc Brut Vintage
Starters, fish-based entrees (warm or cold)		Brut Blanc de Blancs
Warm oysters	In a <i>crème fraîche</i> sauce	Brut Vintage
Fish	Poached, grilled	Brut Blanc de Blancs
Fish	With butter or cream	Brut Non Vintage (traditional blending) or Brut Blanc de Noirs
Salmon	Smoked, in aspic, marinated or sushi	Brut Blanc de Blancs
Foie gras	<i>Au naturel</i> or on toast	Vintage, mainly from black grapes; or Brut Blanc de Blancs of older vintage or aged in oak
Poultry	Roast or in a white sauce	Brut Blanc de Noirs or Brut mainly from black grapes
Red or white meat	Grilled or with a sauce	Brut Non Vintage (traditional blending)
White meat	Curried, Colombo-style or in a tagine	Rosé Brut Vintage
Truffles		Blanc de Noirs or Brut of older vintage, mainly from black grapes
Game	Stew, with mushrooms or chestnuts	Vintage or Rosé Blanc de Noirs, Brut of older vintage or aged in oak
Creamy cheese		Brut Blanc de Blancs
Strong flavoured, blue-veined cheese		Blanc de Noirs or Brut Vintage mainly from black grapes
Goat's cheese, blue cheese or strong flavoured cheese		Demi-Sec Vintage Rosé
Desserts	Based on cream, marzipan, pistachios or fruits	Demi-Sec white or Rosé, or Champagne of older vintage

HOW TO STORE CHAMPAGNE



Champagne is ready for drinking upon release, matured to perfection in the producer's cellars. Like other great wines, Champagne is nonetheless remarkably long-lived and will continue to improve in the bottle well beyond the minimum aging periods required by law.





Aging is a slow, continuous process, lasting anything from a few years to several decades – it all depends on the intended style of ‘cuvée’. Producers do not always release an entire vintage at one time, but hold back some bottles to age further in their cellars. This means that the same Champagne may be released as a young wine and then later as a much older bottling. Youthful aromas of fruit and flowers gradually make way for riper scents of stewed fruit and brioche, sometimes with an underlying toastiness – the flavours become more rounded with age.

Champagne wines, bottled with a crown cap or sealed with a cork, are aged on their lees in the producer’s cellars prior to disgorgement. *Dosage* then adds the final touch to the Champagne before final corking. The Champagne is now technically ready to drink, but it can also undergo further bottle aging, either before release in the producer’s cellars, or following release and purchase in a custom wine cellar.

There are two golden rules for storing Champagne wine at home: first, a constant, low ambient temperature of 10-15°C (50-59°F); second, no direct exposure to sunlight or excessive vibration. It makes no difference whether the bottles are stored on their side or upright.



Bottles stored on their side or upright

Contrary to received wisdom, there is no risk of the cork drying out if the bottle is stored upright – partly because of the ambient humidity in a wine cellar, and partly because of the liquid in the bottle itself. Stacking bottles on their sides may be more practical from a storage point of view but it is by no means essential.



THINK PLEASURE,
THINK PARTIES,
THINK CELEBRATION
— THINK CHAMPAGNE

THINK PLEASURE, THINK PARTIES, THINK CELEBRATION — THINK CHAMPAGNE



Champagne wines are made by Champagne growers and houses who take pleasure in giving pleasure – people who craft their wines with a single-minded passion that has endured now for more than three centuries. *Joie de vivre* is their mission – to create wines that bring enchantment to every occasion, heighten every gourmet experience and make every event a celebration.



TASTING SHEET

Name of the Champagne: Vintage (where relevant):

SIGHT

White Champagne: green gold grey gold straw yellow yellow gold old gold
Rosé Champagne: Pale pink powder pink deep pink salmon pink

SMELL

PRIMARY AROMAS

YOUTH

Floral: white flowers lime flower orange blossom
Fruity: citrus seeded fruits yellow fruits exotic fruits red fruits
Various: mineral spice vegetal
 other

SECONDARY AROMAS

MATURITY

ripe fruits crystallised fruits honey beeswax
 brioche, Danish pastry dried fruits/nuts dried flowers
 vanilla caramel
 other

TERTIARY AROMAS

COMPLETENESS

gingerbread quince jelly undergrowth
 toast mocha coffee
 other

TASTE

lively lightweight lush creamy
 full-bodied firmly structured round complex

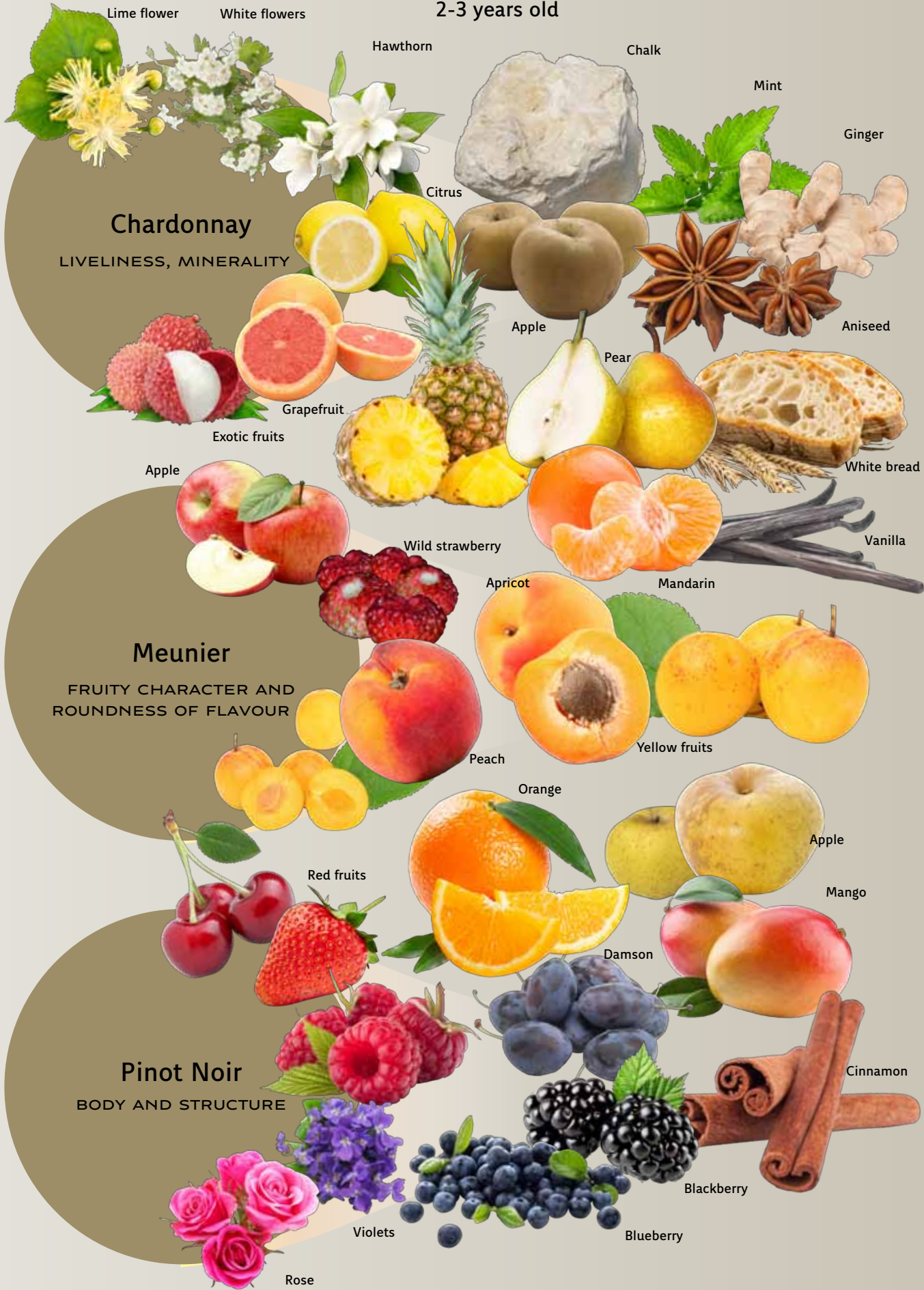
NOTES

.....
.....
.....

AROMA DEVELOPMENT

YOUTHFUL RADIANCE

2-3 years old



IN CHAMPAGNE WINES

MATURE BALANCE

from 3-4 to 6-8 years old

COMPLETENESS AND COMPLEXITY

more than 6-8 years old





CHAMPAGNE

FROM CELLAR TO TABLE

GLOSSARY

AROMAS, FLORAL: white flowers (hawthorn, honeysuckle, lime flower, acacia, jasmine, orange blossom), roses and violets.

AROMAS, BAKING: white bread, fresh-baked bread, patisserie, brioche.

AROMAS, COOKED FRUITS: stewed fruits, jam, fruit jelly.

AROMAS, DRIED FRUITS/NUTS: almond, fig, hazelnut, date, walnut, raisin.

AROMAS, EMPYREUMATIC: notes of toast, roasted beans (cocoa, coffee) and burnt caramel.

AROMAS, FRESH FRUITS: citrus (lemon, orange, grapefruit, mandarin), white- and yellow-fleshed fruits (apricot, Mirabelle plum, peach, pear, apple), exotic fruits (litchi, pineapple, passion fruit, mango), red- and dark-skinned fruits (cherry, strawberry, raspberry, blackcurrant, blueberry).

AROMAS, LACTIC: butter, milk toffee.

AROMAS, MINERAL: chalk, flint.

AROMAS, PRIMARY: also known as varietal aromas, the aromas specific to the grape variety itself.

AROMAS, SECONDARY: wine aromas that come from the fermentation process.

AROMAS, SPICE: traces of aniseed, cinnamon, vanilla, ginger.

AROMAS, TERTIARY: wine aromas that develop with bottle maturation and aging.

ASSEMBLAGE: the blending of base wines with different sensory characteristics (colours, aromas, flavours) to create a 'cuvée' that is distinctly more than the sum of its parts. A blend may combine base wines from different crus (villages), different grape varieties and different years.

CRU: village.

CUVÉE: Two meanings in Champagne parlance: either the first-pressing juices (amounting to 2,050hl, extracted from a 4,000k press load); or the blended Champagne wine itself.

DISGORGEMENT: the act of ejecting the lees (essentially deposits of dead yeast cells) that have formed in the course of aging and collected in the neck of the bottle through riddling ('remuage', see below). Champagne may be disgorged by machine or by hand.

EFFERVESCENCE: the bubbles resulting from the build-up of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the secondary fermentation process (*prise de mousse*). Carbon dioxide dissolves in the wine and escapes when the bottle is opened.

MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION: the natural de-acidification of wine by the transformation of malic acid (a diacid found in apples) to lactic acid (a monoacid found in milk) through the action of lactic bacteria.

MUST: unfermented grape juice.

PRISE DE MOUSSE: literally 'capturing the sparkle'. The term refers to the transformation of still wine to sparkling wine as a result of bottle fermentation. The yeasts consume the sugar in the wine, producing alcohol and carbon dioxide, together with esters and superior alcohols that contribute to the wine's sensory profile.

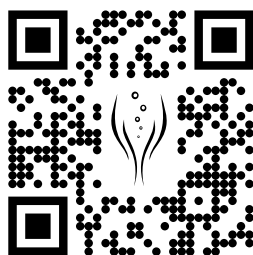
REMUAGE (riddling): the process of rotating Champagne bottles after the maturation on the lees, causing the deposit formed in the process to collect in the neck of the bottle. Automated riddling is now the norm, though some producers still riddle bottles by hand.

RESERVE WINES: still wines, set aside in barrels or vats for several years, which add an extra dimension to the blend.

TERROIR: that combination of natural and human factors (weather, geology, grape varieties and traditional wine growing practices) that makes a particular region unique.

TIRAGE: French term for bottling.

TIRAGE STOPPER: stopper used for the temporary sealing of newly-bottled Champagne, usually consisting of a crown cap or sometimes a cork. The 'tirage' stopper is removed when the wine is disgorged.



VIGNERONS ET MAISONS



COMITÉ INTERPROFESSIONNEL
DU VIN DE CHAMPAGNE

5, rue Henri-Martin - CS 30 135
51204 EPERNAY Cedex - France

Tél. + 33 (0)3 26 51 19 30 - Fax +33 (0)3 26 55 19 79
info@champagne.fr - www.champagne.fr