

Tom Stevenson's *Champagne & Sparkling Wine Guide* **2003**

**'An authority acknowledged even
by the Champenois...'**
The Sunday Times

Voted Best Wine Guide by World Food Media Awards

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Foreword

This is the final edition of my fizz guide and to tell the truth it's a relief to know that I don't have to put myself through this particular treadmill again. A combination of logistical, personal and work problems in the one year when I was supposed to be updating my *Christie's World Encyclopedia of Champagne & Sparkling Wine* delayed both that book and this one. When I eventually finished this fizz guide, it was far too late for me to contemplate selling it. How could I ask money for a buyer's guide that would be 12 months late? I couldn't, but it was no one else's fault, and not only did I feel a debt to those who had submitted their wines in good faith, but I also did not want to let down my readers, who expected another edition. The only honourable course was to strip away the prices, update the notes with wines I had tasted in the meantime, and offer my last edition as a free download. The contents have not gone through the traditional system of copy editing, so there might be even more typos than usual!

Tom Stevenson
August 2003

Sparkling Wine - How it is made

The theory behind sparkling wine is simple. Fermentation converts sugar into alcohol and carbonic gas - if the gas is set free the wine is still, if not, it is sparkling. To capture the gas, the wine undergoes a second fermentation in a sealed container. The gas gushes out in the form of tiny bubbles when the container is opened. According to research carried out by Moët & Chandon there are on average 250 million bubbles in a bottle of sparkling wine. The internal pressure in a bottle of sparkling wine is equivalent to the pressure of a double-decker bus tyre.

The Grapes

Various are used, but Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are best for premium quality sparkling wine - they are relatively neutral, with a good balance of sugar and acidity when ripe.

Cuve Close Method

Most cheap fizz is produced by *cuve close* (or "Charmat" or "tank" method). Both fermentations take place in large vats, then the wine is bottled under pressure. As *cuve close* is a bulk-production method it attracts low-calibre base wines, but the speed and minimum yeast contact makes it perfect for sweet, aromatic fizz such as Asti.

Méthode champenoise

The greatest brut-style (dry) sparkling wines are made by *méthode champenoise*. As in *cuve close*, the first fermentation takes place en masse, sometimes in oak *barriques*, but the second takes place in the actual bottle in which the wine is sold.

Méthode champenoise terms

In the European Union the term *méthode champenoise* is reserved for Champagne. However, the terms below are all synonymous with it.

English-Language Countries Traditional Method France Méthode Traditionnelle Méthode Classique "Crémant" appellations	Spain Método tradicional "Cava" appellation Italy Metodo Classico Metodo Tradizionale "Talento"	Germany Flaschengärung nach dem Traditionellen Verfahren Klassische Flaschengärung Traditionelle Flaschengärung South Africa Cap Classique
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Malolactic Conversion

Most fizz undergoes "malolactic", a natural process of fermentation that converts hard malic acid into soft lactic acid and adds creaminess to the wine. Of the few producers who prevent the malolactic, Bollinger, Alfred Gratien, Krug and Lanson are the most famous. In the New World

the malolactic is often overworked because grapes are picked early, and have higher levels of malic acid.

Blending and the Prise de Mousse

The blending (*assemblage*) of the base wine is undertaken after the first fermentation. The champenois are the masters of this, and may create a non-vintage *cuvée* from as many as 70 base wines. Sugar, selected yeasts, yeast nutrients and a clarifying agent are then added to induce the mousse. The second fermentation is often referred to as the *prise de mousse*, or "capturing the sparkle", and it can take months to complete. In contrast to the first fermentation, which should be relatively fast and warm, the second is slow and cool.

Autolysis

When the second fermentation is complete, the yeast cells undergo an enzymatic breakdown called autolysis, which is epitomized by an acacia-like flowery freshness. Good autolysis adds complexity and ensures finesse.

Remuage and Disgorgement

In *méthode champenoise* only, the yeast deposit created during the second fermentation is encouraged down the neck of the inverted bottle into a small plastic pot held in place by a crown-cap. *Remuage* (or riddling), as this is called, takes eight weeks by hand, or eight days by machine. The sediment is removed (disgorged) by immersing the bottle in freezing brine, and ejecting the semi-frozen pot without losing too much wine or gas.

The Dosage

Before corking, the *liqueur d'expédition* is added. In all cases except *extra brut* (very dry), this will include some sugar. The younger the wine, the greater the dosage of sugar required.

Storing and Serving Sparkling Wine

Most fizz is best drunk within a year or so. Only a few *cuvées* are capable of developing truly complex aromas and flavours after disgorgement.

Why Store?

Typically, Chardonnay turns "toasty" and Pinot Noir "biscuity", although the reverse is possible and even a whiff of clean sulphur can in time contribute to the toastiness of a wine. Some first-class Chardonnays develop specific, complex aromas such as flowery hazelnuts, creamy brazil nuts and mellow walnuts. The greatest Champagnes can age gracefully for decades, to create rich nuances of macaroons, coconut, cocoa and coffee.

How to Store

Fizz is more sensitive to temperature and light than other wines, but there should be no problem keeping it for a year or two at any fairly constant temperature between 12 and 18°C (40-60°F). Higher temperatures increase the rate of oxidation; erratic temperatures can seriously damage the wine. If you do not have a cellar, keep it in a cool place inside a box. Very long-term storage should be at 9-11°C (48-52°F) in total darkness. There is no reason why bottles should be stored horizontally apart from to save space: the CO₂ in the bottle neck keeps the cork moist and

swollen even when upright. Some Champagnes have retained their sparkle for a century under ideal conditions.

Some Champagnes, such as Roederer Cristal, are shipped with a yellow, anti-UV wrapping, which you should leave on while storing. Brown-glass bottles offer better protection against ultra-violet than green-glass, and dead-leaf or dark green is better than light or bright green.

Chilling

Temperature determines the rate at which bubbles in a sparkling wine are released. Bubbly should not be opened at room temperature - the wine will quickly froth up and go flat. Chill it, ideally down to 4.5-7°C (40-45°F), the lower temperature for parties and receptions where the room temperature is likely to rise.

It is okay to chill wine in a refrigerator for a couple of hours, but try not to leave it longer than a day because the cork might stick or shrink. Emergency chilling of a sparkling wine by putting it in the coldest part of a deep-freeze for 15 minutes is fine.

A bucket of ice and water (never just ice, the water is essential for transferring temperatures) is still one of the best and quickest ways to chill a bottle of fizz, but faster still are the gel-filled jackets that are kept in the deep freeze and slip over the bottle for about six minutes. A useful tip when using either ice-buckets or gel-filled jackets is to invert the bottle gently two or three times before opening. This prevents the wine in the neck being significantly warmer than the rest of the bottle, which reduces the chance of the wine gushing like a fountain when the bottle, not to mention ensuring that the first will be as chilled as the last.

Opening

Remember that the secret of success is to try and prevent the cork from actually coming out. Remove the foil to begin, or simply score around the base of the wire cage. Then gently untwist the wire and loosen the bottom of the cage, but don't remove it. Hold the bottle with a cloth if you are a novice, and completely enclose the cork and cage in one hand (the right, if you are right-handed). Holding the base of the bottle with your other hand, twist both ends slowly in opposite directions, backwards and forwards. As soon as you feel pressure forcing the cork out, actually try to push it back in whilst continuing the twisting operation ever more gently until the cork is released from the bottle with a sigh, not a bang.

Pouring

A good tip is to pour only a little into each glass so that by the time you return to the first glass its foam will already have settled. The alternative is to wait ages for each one to settle as you are pouring. Top up each glass to between two-thirds and three-quarters of the vessel - no more. Do not tilt the glass and pour gently down the inside, it is not lager!

Glasses

A flute or a tulip-shaped glass is ideal and almost any vessel other than a coupe will suffice. The wide, shallow coupe is the worst possible choice for sparkling wine because the mousse goes flat far too quickly and the wine's aroma cannot be appreciated. Whatever glass shape used, the finer the rim the better.

Sparkling wine styles

Categories of style include basic divisions of sweetness, vintage and non-vintage, grape variety, colour and degree of mousse.

Sweetness

Brut is the classic style of dry sparkling wine, with Extra-Brut and Brut Nature being drier still. These terms are all widely used on an international basis despite their French origin, whereas the progressively sweeter styles of Sec, Extra-Sec, Demi-Sec and Doux are invariably translated, thus Sec becomes Seco in Portugal and Spain, Secco in Italy and Trocken in Germany (*see* Glossary for more details).

What's in a Vintage?

A Champagne vintage implies that the harvest was exceptional, while for most other fizz "vintage" is best regarded as a statement of age, not quality. Vintage Champagne must be 100 per cent from the year, but elsewhere it varies (95 per cent in California; 85 in Australia). Store vintage Champagne for 8-10 years from the date of harvest. The term non-vintage (NV) sounds derogatory to many people, but wines from various years can be skilfully blended to create some of the finest *cuvées* available.

Grape varieties

Champagne's classic trio of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier are generally accepted as the grapes best-suited for a classic brut style of Sparkling wine. The only real resistance to this concept is in Spain where the traditional varieties are Parellada, Macabéo and Xarel.lo while Moscato or Muscat is widely regarded as the finest variety for intensely sweet sparkling wines such as Asti. Australia has made Shiraz the first choice for sparkling red wines, although Cabernet, Merlot and other varieties are used. Riesling is traditional for classic Sekt and readers of this guide will know that this is not necessarily an oxymoron. The list is endless, although most of it is full of duds, such as Prosecco, an Italian grape that makes Parellada characterful by comparison.

Colour

Pure Chardonnay *blanc de blancs* (white wine made from white grapes) make good brut-style sparkling wines, and the best come from the Côte des Blancs in Champagne. In the New World, *blanc de noirs* (white wine made from black grapes) can be various shades, but in Champagne the skill is to produce as clear a wine as possible from Pinot Noir or Meunier, and the most famous is Bollinger's Vieilles Vignes Françaises. Champagne *rosé* can be made by blending white wine with a little red. Sparkling red wines are also available, such as Australian Sparkling Shiraz mentioned above.

Crémant

The *crémant* style is noted for its soft, creamy mousse. As a term it originated in Champagne, but since the introduction of Crémant AOCs (Alsace, Bordeaux, Bourgogne, Die, Gaillac, Jura, Limoux, Loire and Luxembourg) it has been banned in all other EU appellations, including its region of origin! Few producers outside France have a reputation for a true *crémant* style. Normal fizz has a pressure of 5-6 atmospheres, while *crémant* has 3.6, but to be a true *crémant*, the mousse must unfold slowly, leaving a creamy cordon in the glass. Mumm de Cramant (sic)

used to be known as Crémant de Cramant and was the best known *crémant* in Champagne. Franciacorta uses the term *satèn* (satin).

Prestige or deluxe *cuvées*

These are *cuvées* that producers feel best epitomize their house style. The greatest known examples include Dom Pérignon (made by Moët & Chandon), Cristal (by Louis Roederer) and Belle Epoque (by Perrier-Jouët). The entire range of Krug is sold at prestige or deluxe quality prices, which is why it is unfair to compare Krug Grande Cuvée with the brut non-vintage of most other houses. Such wines are produced in tiny quantities, and it is their rarity value that determines the high price. The strictest selection of base wines is the most significant defining factor in any prestige *cuvée*.

This Year's (and a bit!) Tastings

Performance tables and an alphabetical listing of recommended producers, with notes on over 1,000 individual Champagnes and sparkling wines.

How the wines are tasted and judged

Almost all the wines in this guide are recommended by me; less than half of one per cent of the wines carry a <?> sign, indicating that they are in an unusual developmental stage and cannot be fully judged yet, but there is evidence to suggest they are likely to be good when ready. Most wines were tasted blind (with labels covered) at my own professionally equipped facility, where producers submit samples. Others were tasted at special tastings organised for the purpose of this guide by various trade bodies.

In addition to regular trips to Champagne I travel to different sparkling wine regions each year to carry out in-depth tastings *in situ*. Champagnes have to score 80 or above to qualify for this guide; other sparkling wines have to 70 or above.

The tasting process

All wines are chilled and tasted against others of a similar style and category (e.g., *blanc de blancs*, rosé, same vintage etc). It is more crucial to taste sparkling wines chilled than it is for any other style of wine. This is because temperature affects the release of carbonic gas, which affects the tactile impression of the mousse and the balance of the wine. Most wines are tasted in my own facility because I do not wish to be influenced by other people's comments. This also allows me to devote as much time as I like to each wine, to search out finesse, rather than size (which is all too obvious and thus the bane of blind tastings). I compare and contrast as many different permutations within a category as possible because the positioning of a wine in a line up can dramatically influence its perception. Obviously I open the back-up for any faulty wine, but so many faults are not easily discernible. Subliminal cork or TCA taint, for example, can wipe the fruit out of a wine without giving any clue that there is a fault. Only by comparing it with exactly the same wine without such a fault can the problem be recognised. I have therefore devised a system whereby a second chilled sample can be on the table within four minutes. This encourages me to open a second bottle even if I have the slightest doubt. Last, but by no means least, some wines that do not shine in the cold, analytical setting of a blind tasting can hint at their usefulness at the table, so they are lugged home where supper is swamped in a sea of covered-up bottles and a different insight gleaned.

In addition to all the normal negative attributes, sparkling wines are marked down if they possess amylic aromas (peardrops, banana, bubblegum) or if they are dominated by heavy-handed malolactic (buttery, caramel, butterscotch) or new oak because all these characteristics detract from the finesse and vitality of this particular style.

How the wines are described

It is harder to describe a wine with a few words than it is to use many, and a quick flick through this and all previous editions of the guide will indicate how dismally I have failed in this respect. When describing the actual wine I try to be specific because it is easier for readers to distinguish between two wines if the fruit in one is, say, strawberries, while the other is, maybe, pineapple. If, however, I describe one as having aromas of strawberries, blackberries, cherries, bitter chocolate, coffee and toast, while another is raspberries, redcurrants, damsons, white chocolate, wholemeal biscuit and toast, it is difficult to imagine what either wine tastes like, let alone what makes one different from the other. Should a wine have any of these characteristics, I will list them, but if they're not there, I won't invent them. Many *cuvées* simply smell and taste like a very fine Champagne without having the slightest hint of any specific fruit, flower, nut, herb or spice. In truth few wines reveal more than one or two specific aromas or flavours.

As far as colour and mousse are concerned, an absence of comment can be taken to mean that they are at least satisfactory. There is little point distinguishing between various hues of straw colour and if the mousse is of normal strength with smallish bubbles, what point is there in repeating this? Only extremes are worthy of note.

I tend to focus on balance and finesse because although these two inseparable characteristics are notoriously difficult to define, they nevertheless represent why one wine might be preferred to another. I also hark on about the level of acidity and whether it is ripe because this is essential to quality in a sparkling wine. I divide sparkling wine into basic styles, be they light-bodied or full, fruit-driven or complex, striving for elegance or character. And when it is obvious to me, I explain how a wine will develop.

The Guide's 100-point Scoring System

When tasting for this guide, I try to maintain the same yardstick, whatever the origin or style of the wine, but I taste by category and to be absolutely honest I sometimes worry whether an 85-point rated California fizz is indeed the equivalent of, say, an 85-point rated Champagne tasted two or three weeks apart. Hopefully it is - or at least, more times than not.

However, what confuses the concept of the universal score is that the intrinsic qualities of each style or region must be respected. Some critics believe this dilutes the universal yardstick, but if it does then no one could say that a 90-point Bordeaux is the same quality as a 90-point Burgundy, and that would be sheer poppycock.

What the scores tell us

Thanks to Robert Parker, the American wine critic, the 100-point scale is now globally recognised. Since Parker utilises only half the points (the lowest scoring wine in his system receives 50 points), he has been accused of scoring out of 50 rather than 100, and as far as I can tell from his own words, I think he does not disagree. On the other hand, the lowest score in this guide is 70, which has prompted some critics to suggest that I mark out of 30, which is something I flatly refute! To make it absolutely clear that I do in fact utilise the entire 100-point scale, I should point out that many wines I taste for this guide score between 0 and 69, but

since they fail to achieve recommendation (see **How the wines are tasted and judged** above) they are excluded from this book. Just because there are no wines below 70 points in this guide does not mean that I score out of 30. It is not that I shy away from revealing who makes dross. *My Christie's World Encyclopedia of Champagne & Sparkling Wine* (updated edition published by Absolute Press in July 2003) attempts to provide a comprehensive, more timeless coverage of the subject, including the bad and the ugly, thus scores as low as 35 can be found. This publication, however, is not meant to provide comprehensive coverage. Its aim is to reduce coverage to those wines readers should buy.

70 The point at which any sparkling wine other than Champagne becomes interesting as far as I'm concerned.

75 Any sparkling wine other than Champagne that receives this score is not just interesting, but good enough to grace the table of a self-confessed Champagne addict.

80 Because Champagne has such intrinsic advantages over sparkling wines produced in less favourable *terroirs*, this is the level at which I start to take interest in an inexpensive BOB or secondary brand.

85 The sort of quality that Champagne has to be to warrant inclusion in my cellar. If a non-Champagne sparkling wine scores this high, it is of exceptional quality indeed.

90 A top quality Champagne, probably vintage or prestige *cuvée*. Any wine outside of Champagne scoring 90 points or more can be considered as something truly special. A 90-point wine, Champagne or otherwise, deserves a hefty premium over the competition and will probably repay 3-5 years additional cellarage to reveal its true potential.

95 The greatest Champagnes. Rare even from the top houses. A very special and memorable experience. Most could be left forgotten in a cellar for 10 years without any worry whatsoever.

100 Perfection - impossible!

Notes The scores for the same wine can fluctuate from year to year because different disgorgements produce wines of a different potential. This also applies to the when to drink time-scales. Furthermore, scores can vary because although I take into account both actual and potential quality, the emphasis in any annual guide must be on the former rather than the latter. When unexpected factors come into play, causing a wine to show less well than predicted in an earlier edition, I give the wine a <?> symbol and try to explain what has happened.

2003 Comparative Performance Tables

Almost all the wines found in the alphabetical listing are grouped here according to their various categories. This enables readers to zero in on the best quality and value *cuvées* within a particular country, region, style or vintage. Full tasting notes and when to drink information can be found in the alphabetical listing.

The wines are listed in descending order of score and strictly alphabetical (including first names and initials) within each score, except for the listing by French Francs, which is by price.

Note Wines not included in the following performance tables include (i) those with a <?> symbol; (ii) where too few wines qualified for a specific category; and (iii) wines that do not fit naturally into any grouping.

Remember!

85 Points - 'The sort of quality Champagne has to be to warrant inclusion in my cellar' - Tom Stevenson

Don't restrict your choice to 90 point wines - I don't!

Champagne

Champagne produces a greater volume of higher quality sparkling wine than any other wine region, thus it holds pole position in this part of the guide and is followed by other sparkling wine areas of France. The rest of the world's fizz is listed by country in strict alphabetical order.

Champagne Brut Non-vintage & Multi-vintage

This section encompass every recommended Champagne that does not carry a single vintage, whether it is absolute entry-level or a deluxe "multi-vintage" cuvée. The latter, of course, should score significantly higher and indeed they do, as Grand Siècle and Krug Grand Cuvée admirably demonstrate, but just look at the outstanding performance of Charles Heidsieck's Mis en Cave. A Brut style must have between 0 and 15 grams per litre of residual sugar (added as the dosage after disgorgement), although most Champagnes at the lower-end of this scale will be sold as an Extra-Brut or a Brut Nature. The sugar should not be noticeable, even at the top end of the range, if properly balanced by ripe acidity. A true Brut should thus taste dry, but this does not mean austere, as young cuvées should possess fruit, while mature ones will have a mellowed richness.

<96>Grand Siècle NV La Cuvée par Laurent-Perrier, Brut

<95>Krug NV Grande Cuvée Brut

<91>Charles Heidsieck NV Brut Réserve, Mis en Cave en 1997

<91>Charles Heidsieck NV Brut Réserve, Mis en Cave en 1996

<91>Louis Roederer NV Brut Premier (*magnum*)

<90>Bollinger NV Special Cuvée, Brut (*magnum*)

<90>Jacquart NV Brut de Nominée

<90>Jacquesson NV Brut Cuvée No. 728

<90>Louis Roederer NV Brut Premier

<90>Serge Mathieu NV Cuvée Prestige Brut

<89>Deutz NV Brut Classic

<89>Gosset NV Grande Réserve Brut

<89>Joseph Perrier NV Cuvée Royale Brut

<89>Roger Brun NV Brut Réserve

<88>Alfred Gratien NV Brut

<88>Alfred Gratien NV Cuvée Paradis

<88>Bollinger NV Special Cuvée, Brut

<88>Drappier NV Carte d'Or Brut

<88>Lanson NV Black Label

<88>Moutard NV Cuvée aux 6 Cépages

<88>Princesse des Thunes NV Ambonnay Grand Cru

<88>R de Ruinart NV Brut

<88>Raoul Collet NV Carte Rouge Brut Millésime (*magnum*)

<88>Serge Mathieu NV Tête de Cuvée Select, Brut
<88>Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin NV Brut
<87>Boizel NV Brut Réserve
<87>Bruno Paillard NV Brut Première Cuvée
<87>Demoiselle NV Tête de Cuvée Brut, Vranken
<87>Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne, Brut Premier Cru
<87>G.H. Mumm NV Grand Cru Brut
<87>Jacquart NV Brut Mosaïque
<87>Moutard NV Brut Grande Cuvée
<87>Pol Roger NV Brut White Foil
<87>Tsarine NV Tête de Cuvée Brut, Chanoine
<86>Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Réserve
<86>Clos du Moulin NV Brut Premier Cru, Cattier
<86>Delamotte NV Brut
<86>Delbeck NV Brut Héritage
<86>Fleury NV Fleur de l'Europe Brut
<86>Georges Gardet NV Brut Spécial
<86>Henri Mandois NV Cuvée de Réserve, Brut
<86>Oudinot NV Clos Saint-Rémy Brut
<86>P. Brugnion NV Cuvée Élégance, Brut Premier Cru
<86>Pannier NV Brut Sélection
<86>René Geoffroy NV Cuvée Prestige, Brut Premier Cru
<86>Tarlant NV Pinot Meunier
<86>Vilmart NV Grande Réserve, Brut Premier Cru
<85>A. Margaine NV Brut Premier Cru
<85>Alexandre Bonnet NV Cuvée Prestige
<85>Charles de Cazanove NV Cuvée Cazanova Brut
<85>Chartogne-Taillet NV Cuvée Sainte-Anne Brut
<85>Château de Boursault NV Brut Tradition
<85>Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne Brut Non Vintage
<85>E. Barnaut NV Grande Réserve, Brut Grand Cru
<85>Forget-Chemin NV Carte Blanche Brut
<85>Gatinois NV Grand Cru
<85>Guy Cadel NV Grande Réserve Brut
<85>H. Blin NV Brut Tradition
<85>Heidsieck Monopole NV Premiers Crus Brut
<85>Henri Goutorbe NV Cuvée Tradition, Brut
<85>Jacquart NV Brut Tradition
<85>Jean Moutardier NV Sélection Brut
<85>Laurent-Perrier NV Brut L.P.
<85>Mailly Grand Cru NV Brut Réserve, Grand Cru
<85>Mercier NV Brut
<85>Michel Arnould NV Réserve Brut Grand Cru
<85>Moët & Chandon NV Brut Impérial
<85>P. Brugnion NV Brut Premier Cru
<85>Perrier-Jouët NV Grand Brut

<85>Philipponnat NV Royale Réserve Brut
<85>Pierre Gimonet NV Cuis Premier Cru
<85>Piper-Heidsieck NV Brut
<85>Piper-Heidsieck NV Cuvée Spéciale Jean-Paul Gaultier, Brut
<85>Pommery NV Brut Royal
<85>Raoul Collet NV Carte Perle, Brut 1er Cru
<85>Raymond Boulard NV Brut Tradition
<85>René Geoffroy NV Cuvée de Réserve, Brut Premier Cru
<85>Rémy Massin et Fils NV Brut Réserve
<85>Robert Fleury 1902-1998 NV Brut
<85>Tarlant NV Brut Réserve
<85>Tarlant NV Cuvée Louis
<85>Veuve A. Devaux NV Cuvée D Brut
<84>Adam-Garnotel NV Brut Tradition
<84>Arlaux NV Brut
<84>Bricout NV Brut Réserve
<84>Chanoine NV Grande Réserve Brut
<84>Charles Lafitte NV Tête de Cuvée, Brut
<84>Château de Bligny NV Brut Réserve
<84>Château de Boursault NV Brut Tradition
<84>De Venoge NV Brut Sélect, Cordon Bleu
<84>Duval-Leroy NV Brut
<84>Forget-Brimont NV Brut Premier Cru
<84>Gauthier NV Brut
<84>Goutorbe NV Cuvée Prestige, Brut Premier Cru
<84>Guy Cadel NV Carte Blanche Brut
<84>Heidsieck Héritage NV Brut
<84>Henri Abelé NV Brut
<84>J.M. Gobillard NV Tradition
<84>Jean Moutardier NV Carte d'Or
<84>Jean Velut NV Brut
<84>Le Gallais NV Cuvée du Manoir
<84>Oudinot NV Brut
<84>Roger Pouillon NV Fleur de Mareuil
<84>Vicomte de Castellane NV Croix Rouge Brut Millésime
<83>Alain Thienot NV Brut
<83>Canard-Duchêne NV Brut
<83>Daniel Dumont NV Grande Réserve, Brut Premier Cru
<83>G.H. Mumm NV Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé
<83>George Goulet NV Brut Grande Cuvée
<83>Heidsieck Monopole NV Blue Top Brut
<83>Jacquesson NV Brut Perfection
<83>Jeanmaire NV Cuvée Brut
<83>R.C. Lemaire NV Sélect Réserve, Brut
<82>Alexandre Bonnet NV Grande Réserve, Brut
<82>Amazone de Palmer NV Brut

- <82>**Ferdinand Bonnet NV Brut Héritage**
- <82>**Guy Charbaut NV Brut**
- <82>**J. de Telmont NV Grande Réserve Brut**
- <82>**J.M. Gobillard NV Grande Réserve**
- <82>**Palmer NV Brut**
- <82>**Pierrel NV Cuvée Arabesque Gold, Brut**
- <82>**Royer NV Cuvée de Réserve**
- <81>**Taittinger NV Brut Réserve**

Champagne Nature & Brut Extra (Non-vintage and Vintaged)

As regular readers will know, I am not a great fan of non-dosage Champagnes, this has less to do with the style than its quality. Such wines do not improve with age because sugar is required for a Champagne to age gracefully after disgorgement (see Reaction Maillard in the Glossary). The older a Champagne is before it is disgorged, the less dosage required - because it will have a more mellowed taste - but no matter how old or great the Champagne is, it will turn coarse and oxidative without a certain amount of sugar. Enjoy this style by all means, but recognise that sugar brings finesse and enables further ageing: do not become one of the mindless "anti-sugar" brigade. The cleverest and best-value wine here is Philipponnat's new Cuvée 1522.

- <91>**Bollinger 1990 R.D. Extra Brut**
- <90>**Duval-Leroy 1995 Fleur de Champagne, Extra Brut**
- <90>**Philipponnat NV Cuvée 1522 Extra Brut**
- <88>**Pierre Gimonet 1995 Cuvée Oenophile Extra-Brut**
- <86>**Delouvin Nowack 1996 Brut Extra Selection**
- <85>**Mailly Grand Cru NV Extra Brut, Grand Cru**
- <85>**Jacquesson 1995 Dizy "Corne Beautray"**
- <83>**A.R. Lenoble NV Réserve Extra Brut**
- <83>**Georges Vesselle 1997 Brut Zero Millésime, Grand Cru**
- <80>**André et Michel Drappier NV Pinot Noir Zero Dosage**
- <77>**E. Barnaut NV Sélection, Extra Brut Grand Cru**

Champagne Extra Sec & Sec

Sec (or Dry) is rarely seen these days. It can contain anything between 17 and 33 grams per litre of residual sugar, thus ranging between barely sweeter than a Brut and as sweet as a Demi-Sec. Extra-Sec is far more commonly encountered, although only one tasted this year was worthy of recommendation. This style actually overlaps Brut and the dry end of Sec, with between 12 and 20 grams per litre of sugar. These Champagnes can be very useful at the table where savoury dishes contain a certain sweetness or fruitiness.

- <87>**Louis Roederer NV Rich Sec**
- <85>**E. Barnaut NV Cuvée Douceur, Sec Grand Cru**
- <80>**Moët & Chandon NV White Star, Extra Dry**

Champagne Demi-Sec

For many years this sweet style, which must have between 33 and 50 grams of residual sugar, has been debased by the vast majority of Champagne producers who have pandered to an unsophisticated sector of French supermarket customers who like to drink sweet. By this I do not mean that sweetness in Champagne or indeed any wine is debasing or that to enjoy sweetness is

a sign of poor taste, but there are vast numbers who can only enjoy sweet drinks and cannot taste beyond that sweetness, thus Champagne producers have been able to hide their inferior wines behind a mask of sugar. However, we are gradually seeing a rise in the number of high quality demi-sec produced.

<88>**Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Rich Réserve**

<87>**Piper-Heidsieck NV Demi-Sec**

<87>**Pol Roger NV Rich Special Demi-Sec**

<85>**Beaumont des Crayères NV Demi-Sec Grande Réserve**

<85>**G.H. Mumm NV Demi-Sec**

<82>**Oudinot NV Medium-Dry**

Champagne Blanc de Blancs Non-vintage

Without doubt blanc de blancs are more expressive from a single vintage, but non-vintage cuvées can offer superb value and, contrary to popular belief, a great many are made.

<90>**Boizel NV Chardonnay Brut Blanc de Blancs**

<90>**Jacques Selosse NV Brut Tradition, Blanc de Blancs**

<89>**Heidsieck Monopole NV Diamant Blanc, Brut**

<88>**Abel Lepitre NV Cuvée No. 134, Blanc de Blancs Brut**

<87>**Joseph Perrier NV Cuvée Royale, Blanc de Blancs Brut**

<87>**Le Mesnil NV Blanc de Blancs, Grand Cru Brut**

<83>**Henriot NV Blanc de Blancs Brut**

<85>**Agrapart NV Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru**

<85>**Chartogne-Taillet NV Cuvée Sainte-Anne, Blanc de Blancs**

<85>**Jean Milan NV Brut Spécial, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs**

<85>**Moët & Chandon, Les Vignes de Saran NV Chouilly Grand Cru**

<85>**Vicomte de Castellane NV Chardonnay Brut**

<84>**Larmandier-Bernier NV Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru**

<84>**G.H. Mumm, Mumm de Cramant NV Brut Chardonnay, Grand Cru**

<84>**Paul Goerg NV Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru**

<83>**Comte Audoin de Dampierre NV Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru**

<83>**Pierrel NV Brut Premier Cru**

<82>**George Goulet NV Blanc de Blancs Grande Cuvée**

Champagne Blanc de Noirs Vintage & Non-vintage

The idea that a blanc de noirs is an especially big, rich and meaty Champagne came about because Bollinger set the yardstick with its Vieilles Vignes Françaises. That extraordinary wine is, however, made from grapes that are super-ripe and super-concentrated because they are grown on ungrafted vines, which bear less fruit per plant, consequently ripen one week before surrounding vineyards, but they are not allowed to be picked any earlier. The Beast of Bollinger is thus an anomaly and usually blasts all opposition for six, but the 1996 is the most extraordinary Vieilles Vignes Françaises yet. It is also only the second time I have awarded a Champagne 99 points (the as unreleased Krug 1990 being the other). A bit unfair on the rest, perhaps, that it should be the only vintage in this line-up of blanc de noirs, but it would be even more unfair if I denied Bollinger 1996 Vieilles Vignes Françaises its moment of glory just because there were no other vintaged blanc de noirs Champagnes with which to create a performance table. Besides, the non-vintage cuvées below have nothing to apologise for,

particularly as they qualified for recommendation whereas a number of vintaged blanc de noirs did not.

Some blanc de noirs can have such finesse that it is hard to imagine that they do not contain a substantial amount of Chardonnay. Serge Mathieu Blanc de Noirs from the Aube comes to mind. There is also the notion that these wines must be pure Pinot Noir, but many blanc de noirs are in fact blends of both Pinot Noir and Meunier. The following recommendations are all classic blanc de blancs in that they contain only black grapes and the aim has been to produce as colourless a wine as possible from these black-skinned grapes. They are not New World blanc de noirs, which often contain a small percentage of white grapes and vary in colour from copper-tinged to full rosé.

<99>**Bollinger 1996 Vieilles Vignes Françaises Brut**

<90>**Serge Mathieu NV Cuvée Tradition, Blanc de Noirs Brut**

<90>**Moët & Chandon, Les Sarments d'Aÿ NV Aÿ Grand Cru Brut**

<87>**Brice NV Bouzy Grand Cru Brut**

<86>**G. Fluteau NV Brut Carte Blanche**

<86>**G. Fluteau NV Cuvée Réserve Brut**

<85>**Charles de Cazanove NV Brut Rosé**

<85>**Moët & Chandon, Les Champs de Romont NV Sillery Grand Cru**

<85>**Michel Arnould NV Brut Grand Cru**

<84>**Mailly Grand Cru NV Blanc de Noirs, Grand Cru**

<84>**Oudinot NV Cuvée Blanc de Noirs Brut**

<83>**Paul Déthune NV Blanc de Noirs, Grand Cru Brut**

<82>**Alexandre Bonnet NV Blanc de Noirs, Brut**

<80>**André et Michel Drappier NV Pinot Noir Zero Dosage**

Champagne Rosé Brut Non-vintage

Almost every producer in Champagne has a non-vintage rosé in its range. The quality used to be extremely variable, but more producers are taking this style seriously.

<88>**Serge Mathieu NV Rosé Brut**

<88>**Gosset NV Grande Rosé Brut**

<87>**Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Rosé**

<87>**Duval-Leroy NV "Paris" Brut**

<87>**Jacquesson NV Brut Perfection Rosé**

<87>**Krug Rosé NV Brut**

<87>**Pierre Jamain NV Brut Rosé**

<87>**Pommery NV Brut Rosé**

<87>**Ruinart NV Brut Rosé**

<86>**Besserat de Bellefon NV Cuvée des Moines Rosé**

<86>**Bruno Paillard NV Rosé Brut Première Cuvée**

<86>**Demoiselle NV Rosé, Brut Grande Cuvée**

<86>**G.H. Mumm NV Brut Rosé**

<86>**Michel Arnould NV Rosé Brut Grand Cru**

<86>**Perrier-Jouët NV Blason Rosé**

<85>**Alexandre Bonnet NV Perle Rosée, Brut**

<85>**Baron Albert NV Brut Rosé**

<85>**Beaumont des Crayères NV Grand Rosé Brut**

<85>**Boizel NV Rosé Brut**
 <85>**P. Brugnon NV Brut Rosé Premier Cru**
 <85>**Château de Boursault NV Rosé Brut**
 <85>**Doquet-Jeanmaire NV Rosé, Brut Premier Cru**
 <85>**Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne, Rosé de Saignée Brut**
 <85>**E. Barnaut NV Rosé Authentique, Brut Grand Cru**
 <85>**Forget-Brimont NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru**
 <85>**H. Blin NV Brut Rosé**
 <85>**Henri Goutorbe NV Brut Rosé**
 <85>**Henri Mandois NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru**
 <85>**Jacquart NV Brut Mosaïque Rosé**
 <85>**Mignon & Pierrel NV Cuvée Florale Brut Rosé, Premier Cru**
 <85>**Moët & Chandon NV Brut Impérial Rosé**
 <85>**Paul Déthune NV Brut Rosé, Grand Cru**
 <85>**Raymond Boulard NV Cuvée Rosé Brut**
 <85>**Tsarine NV Rosé Brut, Chanoine**
 <84>**J. Dumangin Fils NV Rosé Brut, Premier Cru**
 <84>**Forget-Chemin NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru**
 <84>**Michel Lorient NV Rosé Brut**
 <84>**A.R. Lenoble NV Brut Rosé**
 <84>**Georges Vesselle NV Brut Rosé, Bouzy Grand Cru**
 <83>**Abel Lepitre NV Brut Rosé**
 <83>**Charles Lafitte NV Grande Cuvée Rosé, Brut**
 <83>**Mercier NV Brut Rosé**
 <83>**R.C. Lemaire NV Brut Rosé**
 <83>**Raoul Collet NV Brut Rosé**
 <82>**Le Gallais NV Cuvée du Manoir**
 <82>**Paul Clouet NV Brut Rosé**
 <82>**Vicomte de Castellane NV Brut Rosé**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1999

The 1999s are only just starting to filter onto the French market. In overall terms, the harvest showed vintage-quality ripeness, but the worst acidity and pH readings for a couple of centuries.

<82>**J.M. Gobillard 1999 Cuvée Prestige**
 <83>**Drappier 1999 Millésime Exception**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1998

Some 1998s have already arrived on the shelf, particularly in France. In terms of fruit, structure and acidity they seem to mirror 1993s, whereas the 1997s are closer to the 1992s. In theory 1998 is not quite as good as 1997, but in theory 1993 was not quite as good as 1992, yet after a few years it became clear that there were significantly more 1993s to recommend than 1992s. This is often the way with so-called marginal vintages, when the quality in the bottle is more dependent on selection than harvest conditions. We will just have to wait and see.

<90>**Henri Mandois 1998 Millésime Brut Premier Cru**
 <90>**Jacquesson 1998 Le Clos de Jacquesson**
 <89>**Egérie de Pannier 1998 Brut**

- <88>**Paul Déthune 1998 Brut Ambonnay Grand Cru**
- <87>**Duval-Leroy 1998 Blanc de Blancs [biody, en futs] Brut**
- <87>**Louise Brison 1998 Millésime Brut**
- <86>**Duval-Leroy 1998 Blanc de Blancs [en Futs] Brut**
- <85>**Pol Roger 1993 Brut Vintage**
- <84>**G. Gruet et Fils 1998 Gilbert Gruet Grand Réserve**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1997

Should be better than 1998, but they do not have such immediate appeal and require a bit more bottle-age to show their true quality. I would have liked to see the 1998s released before the 1997s and, indeed, the 1997s before the 1996s.

- <88>**Abel Lepitre 1997 Brut Millésimé**
- <87>**Gatinois 1997 Grand Cru**
- <85>**Billecart-Salmon 1997 Cuvée Nicolas François Billecart**
- <85>**Vilmart 1997 Grand Cellier d'Or, Brut 1er Cru**
- <83>**Georges Vesselle 1997 Brut Zero Millésime, Grand Cru**
- <83>**J. Dumangin Fils 1997 Carte d'Or, Brut Premier Cru**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1996

Without doubt the best potential quality since 1990, the Champagnes from this vintage have an unprecedented ratio of acidity to sugar, but will this make 1996 the greatest vintage of the 20th century or will it lead to its downfall? The odds are stacked in favour of greatness, but the base wines were so marked that they threatened to have too much character prior to the second fermentation, and that is the sort of problem that we expect in the New World, not Champagne. Furthermore, the

huge amount of malic acid in such ripe grapes (see 1990 for an analytical comparison between that year and 1996) was something that no Champagne-maker had ever experienced. With such distinctive base wines, there is a danger that some 1996s will not have the finesse expected of a great vintage, and with the uniquely high volume of malic acid to contend with, we could even see some horrendous malolactic gaffs. However, the best 1996s should be sensational and, if never moved from their cellar of origin, some could still be sparkling in the early 22nd century!

- <99>**Bollinger 1996 Vieilles Vignes Françaises Brut**
- <98>**Vilmart 1996 Coeur de Cuvée, Brut Premier Cru**
- <97>**Bollinger 1996 Grande Année, Brut**
- <97>**Pol Roger 1996 Brut Vintage**
- <94>**Drappier 1996 Grande Sendrée**
- <94>**Lanson 1996 Gold Label Brut**
- <92>**Gosset 1996 Grand Millésime Brut**
- <91>**Perrier-Jouët 1996 Grand Brut Millésime**
- <91>**Vilmart 1996 Cuvée Création, Brut Premier Cru**
- <90>**Boizel 1996 Grand Vintage, Brut Millésime**
- <90>**Ch. de l'Auche 1996 Nectar de St Rémi, Brut**
- <90>**Fleury 1996 Brut**
- <90>**Guy Cadel 1996 Brut**
- <90>**Henri Mandois 1996 Cuvée Victor Mandois, Brut**
- <90>**Jacquart 1996 Brut Mosaïque Millésimé**

<90>Louis Roederer 1996 Brut Vintage
 <90>Mailly Grand Cru 1996 La Terre Brut
 <90>Mailly Grand Cru 1996 Les Echansons Brut
 <90>Mailly Grand Cru 1996 L'Intemporelle Brut
 <90>Pannier 1996 Brut
 <90>Paul Déthune 1996 Brut Ambonnay Grand Cru, Trilogy Cuvée
 <90>Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Vieilles Vignes de Chardonnay (*magnum*)
 <90>Taittinger 1996 Brut Millésime
 <90>Veuve A. Devaux 1996 Cuvée Millésimée, Brut
 <89>Egérie de Pannier 1996 Brut
 <89>G.H. Mumm 1996 Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé
 <89>Serge Mathieu 1996 Brut
 <88>Guy Charbaut 1996 Brut
 <88>H. Blin 1996 Brut
 <88>Henriot 1996 Brut Millésime
 <88>Louis Brison 1996 Cuvée Tendresse, Brut
 <88>Mailly Grand Cru 1996 Brut
 <88>Veuve A. Devaux 1996 D de Devaux
 <89>Delamotte 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut
 <87>Louis Brison 1996 Cuvée Germain Brulez Brut (*magnum*)
 <87>Moët & Chandon 1996 Millésime Blanc, Brut
 <87>Jean Moutardier 1996 Brut Millésime
 <87>Tribaut 1996 Brut
 <86>Besserat de Bellefon 1996 Brut
 <86>Cuvée Charles Gardet 1996 Brut
 <86>Delouvin Nowack 1996 Brut Extra Selection
 <86>Ferdinand Bonnet 1996 Brut
 <86>René Geoffroy 1996 Cuvée Sélectionnée
 <85>Comte A. de Dampierre 1996 Brut Grand Cru
 <85>Cuvée Jean de la Fontaine 1996 Brut Millésime
 <85>Duval-Leroy 1996 Brut Vintage
 <85>Royer 1996 Brut

Champagne Vintage Brut 1995

This vintage is blossoming beautifully. As expected the 1995s have more class than either the 1993s or 1992s, but like the 1985s they just keep getting better. In fact, the best 1995s are beginning to remind me of the best 1961s.

<98>Salon 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut
 <97>Bollinger 1995 Grande Année, Brut
 <95>Gosset Celebris 1995 Brut
 <95>Cuvée Dom Pérignon 1995 Brut, Moët & Chandon
 <95>Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 La Grande Dame, Brut
 <92>Perrier-Jouët 1995 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut
 <92>Drappier 1995 Grande Sendrée, Brut
 <91>Pol Roger 1995 Brut Vintage
 <91>Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Millésime de Collection (*magnum*)

<91>Bruno Paillard 1995 Brut Millésime
 <90>R de Ruinart 1995 Brut
 <90>Pommery 1995 Cuvée Louise, Brut
 <90>Louis Roederer 1995 Cristal Brut
 <90>Lanson Gold Label 1995 Brut
 <90>G.H. Mumm 1995 Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé
 <90>Femme de Champagne 1995 Brut Millésime
 <90>Duval-Leroy 1995 Fleur de Champagne, Extra Brut
 <90>Cuvée William Deutz 1995 Brut
 <90>Charles de Cazanove 1995 Brut Azur, Premier Cru
 <90>Henriot 1995 Brut Millésime
 <90>Jacquesson 1995 Grand Vin Signature, Brut
 <89>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Palmes d'Or Brut
 <89>Taittinger 1995 Brut Millésimé
 <89>Tsarine 1995 Brut, Chanoine
 <89>Joseph Perrier 1995 Cuvée Royale Brut
 <89>Heidsieck Monopole 1995 Diamant Bleu, Brut
 <89>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Brut Premier Cru
 <89>Deutz 1995 Brut
 <89>De Saint Gall 1995 Brut
 <89>Binet 1995 Brut
 <88>Raoul Collet 1995 Carte d'Or Brut (*magnum*)
 <88>Pierre Vaudon 1995 Premier Cru Brut
 <88>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Cuvée Spécial
 <88>Fabrice Payelle 1995 Cuvée du Pomponne, Brut Grand Cru
 <88>De Venoge 1995 Brut Millésimé
 <88>Comte Audoin de Dampierre 1995 Grand Cru
 <87>Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Brut Vintage Réserve
 <87>Tarlant 1995 Brut
 <87>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Brut Millésimé
 <87>Maurice Vesselle 1995 Brut Millésime, Bouzy Grand Cru
 <87>Mailly Grand Cru 1995 Cuvée Les Echansons, Brut
 <86>Piper-Heidsieck 1995 Brut
 <86>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Verzy
 <86>H. Billiot Fils 1995 Brut Grand Cru
 <86>Arlaux 1995 Brut
 <85>Vicomte de Castellane 1995 Croix Rouge Brut Millésime
 <85>Raoul Collet 1995 Carte d'Or Brut
 <85>Jacquesson 1995 Dizy "Corne Beautray"
 <85>Pommery 1995 Brut Grand Cru
 <85>Mailly Grand Cru 1995 Brut Millésime, Grand Cru
 <85>Charles Ellner 1995 Millésime Brut
 <85>A.R. Lenoble 1995 Gentilhomme, Brut Grand Cru
 <85>Alain Thienot 1995 Grande Cuvée, Brut
 <85>Alain Thienot 1995 Brut Millésimé
 <84>Vollereaux 1995 Cuvée Marguerite, Brut

- <84>**J. Dumangin Fils 1995 Brut Millésimé, Premier Cru**
- <84>**Demoiselle 1995 Brut**
- <84>**Charles de Cazanove 1995 Stradivarius Brut**
- <83>**Olivier Walsham 1995 Le Bel Amour, Brut Cuvée Spéciale**
- <83>**Jean Moutardier 1995 Millésime**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1994

The worst of the lesser vintages between the great 1990s and the excellent 1995s, all four of which were denied exceptional vintage status through rain at harvest time. Still nothing to challenge Cristal (92 points), although Roederer's Brut Vintage appears to have had a shot of steroids compared to its performance in the two previous editions, when it scored a disappointing 82 points.

- <90>**Louis Roederer 1994 Brut Vintage**
- <86>**Château de Boursault NV Brut Tradition**
- <85>**La Préférence de Baron Albert 1994 Brut Millésime**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1993

On paper the ripeness and acidity levels achieved during this vintage are less impressive than those of 1992. Dom Ruinart is currently neck-to-neck with Cristal, just one point behind Dom Pérignon.

- <91>**Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1993 La Grande Dame, Brut**
- <90>**Pol Roger 1993 Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill Brut**
- <90>**Henri Giraud 1993 Grand Cru Fût de Chêne Brut**
- <87>**Philipponnat 1993 Réserve Millésimée Brut**
- <87>**Jacquesson 1993 Grand Vin Signature, Brut**
- <87>**Gauthier 1993 Brut**
- <85>**Laurent-Perrier 1993 Brut**
- <85>**De Venoge 1993 Grand Vin des Princes Brut**
- <84>**Ayala 1993 Brut Millésimé**
- <83>**Raoul Collet 1993 Carte d'Or Brut**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1992

Theoretically the only vintage quality year between, but not including, 1990 and 1995. However, although it has provided some excellent Champagnes, there has generally been a greater turn out of superior 1993s, even if the later releases below have redressed the balance somewhat.

- <93>**Vilmart 1992 Coeur de Cuvée (magnum)**
- <91>**Perrier-Jouët 1992 Grand Brut**
- <91>**Drappier 1992 Carte d'Or Brut (magnum)**
- <91>**Bollinger 1992 Grande Année, Brut**
- <90>**Duval-Leroy 1992 Fleur de Champagne, Millésimé Brut**
- <89>**Palmer 1992 Brut Millésime**
- <89>**Le Brun de Neuville 1992 Millésime Brut**
- <88>**Jacquart 1992 Brut Mosaïque**
- <88>**De Venoge 1992 Grand Vin des Princes Brut**
- <87>**Pommery 1992 Brut Grand Cru**
- <87>**Jean-Pierre Marniquet 1992 Brut Millésime**

<87>**Jeanmaire 1992 Champagne Elysée, Brut Millésime**
<87>**Bricout 1992 Brut Réserve**
<86>**Alfred Gratien 1992 Brut**
<79>**Nicolas Feuillatte 1992 Brut Premier Cru**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1991

Although less houses declared this vintage and the ripeness-acidity levels were the less impressive than either 1992 or 1993, some producers evidently got it right.

<90>**Clos des Goisses 1991 Brut, Philipponnat**
<88>**Boizel 1991 Joyau de France, Brut**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1990

This is not only a true vintage, it is one of the 18 greatest Champagne vintages of the 20th century. It is hard to believe for those who remember the 1976 Champagnes, but the grapes were riper in 1990 than they were in that drought year. What makes 1990 special, however, is that its grapes also possessed surprisingly high the acidity levels, with a much greater proportion of ripe tartaric to unripe malic than any other vintage on record. Since both 1990 and 1996 have unique acidity to ripeness ratios, I should explain the difference. There are always exceptions, but as a rule of thumb, any Champagne harvest that averages a potential alcohol of 10% ABV or more is probably "vintage quality" and the best total acidity that can reasonably be expected will be eight-point-something, with a pH just above three. Go up to 11% and the acidity falls to six-point-something, with the danger of pH levels hitting 3.1. The average ripeness in 1990 was 11.1%, the highest since 1959 (12%), yet the average total acidity was an 8g/l (expressed as sulphuric), with a pH of 3.04. This was an unprecedented acidity to ripeness ratio. Compare it to what was perceived at the time as an overripe 1976 harvest, which averaged 10.5% ABV with a total acidity of 6.2g/l. Okay, that's why 1990 is special. In 1996, at 10.3% ABV, the average ripeness was closer to 1976, but with an incredible total acidity of 9.9g/l and a pH of 2.97! Break the acidity down and although there is a very healthy 8.3g/l of tartaric acid (only slightly less than 1989 at 8.6 and 1990 at 8.9), we can see that the reason for such a high total acidity and low pH: 9.3g/l of malic acid! In a non-vintage year like 1987 there will only be 8g/l of malic acid. In a vintage-ripe year like 1996 it is nothing short of phenomenal.

A note of caution: [1] Some UK cellared 1990s have aged rapidly, whereas the same wines disgorged on the same date and not moved from Champagne are in perfect condition - beware buying 1990s outside the region.

<95>**Billecart-Salmon 1990 Grande Cuvée, Brut**
<95>**Pol Roger 1990 Brut Vintage**
<95>**Perrier-Jouët 1990 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut**
<91>**Bollinger 1990 R.D. Extra Brut**
<90>**Boizel 1990 Cuvée Sous Bois, Brut**
<90>**Comte Audoin de Dampierre 1990 Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru**
<90>**Duval-Leroy 1990 Blanc de Blancs Chardonnay, Brut**
<89>**Vilmart 1990 Grand Cellier d'Or, Brut**
<88>**Charles Heidsieck 1990 Blanc des Millénaires, Brut**
<87>**Jacquinet 1990 Symphony Brut Grande Réserve**
<87>**Arlaux 1990 Brut**
<87>**Doquet-Jeanmaire 1990 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru**

<85>**Bruno Paillard 1990 N.P.U. Nec Plus Ultra, Brut**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1989

The middle year of the great trio of exceptional successive vintages, 1989 was marked by the Pinot Noir, which had a physiological disorder, causing coloration problem that was most noticeable in some of the cheaper, earlier-released Champagnes. The acidity was very low and pH too high for such a hyped-up vintage (only 1999 has had worse readings in the last 20 years), consequently some Champagnes were too heavy and oxidative.

<92>**Noble Cuvée de Lanson 1989 Brut**

<90>**Pommery 1989 Louise Brut**

<90>**Henriot 1989 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs, Brut**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1988

Although this vintage comes second to the 1990 out of the trio of three successive Champagne vintages, the best 1988s will probably last as long as the best 1990s.

<95>**Krug 1988 Brut**

<88>**Henriot 1988 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs, Brut**

<85>**Pol Roger 1988 Brut Vintage**

Champagne Vintage Brut 1987 & older

Only buy older vintages of Champagne that have come direct from the producer's cellars into the wine-merchant's cellars, and only then if you also know that the wine-merchant's own cellars are good. Preferably buy direct from the producer on a visit. Only buy mature Champagne at auction if the provenance adheres to the above or you have tasted the an example from exactly the same lot.

<97>**Pol Roger 1979 Brut Vintage (Jeroboam)**

<96>**Krug 1985 Brut**

<96>**Perrier-Jouët 1979 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut**

<96>**Pol Roger 1985 Brut Vintage (Jeroboam)**

<94>**Perrier-Jouët 1985 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut**

<93>**Perrier-Jouët 1959 Grand Brut**

<92>**Nicolas Feuillatte 1985 Palmes d'Or Brut**

<90>**Jacquart 1987 Brut**

<90>**Perrier-Jouët 1971 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut**

<85>**Maurice Vesselle 1976 Brut Millésime, Bouzy Grand Cru**

Champagne Vintage Blanc de Blanc 1998

The Chardonnay was better than Pinot Noir in 1998, but so far there is little evidence to suggest it was good enough to excel on its own.

<85>**G. Fluteau 1998 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut**

<85>**Philippe Gonet 1998 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru**

<84>**Pierre Gimonnet 1998 Gastronome Brut 1er Cru**

<83>**Th. Blondel 1998 Blanc de Blancs Brut Premier Cru**

<82>**Terres de Noël, Brut Sélection 1998 Grand Cru, Milan**

<82>**Pierre Moncuit, Cuvée Nicole Moncuit 1998 Vieille Vigne**

<81>**G. Gruet et Fils 1998 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Millésimé**

Champagne Vintage Blanc de Blanc 1997

Strangely few and far between, with only one wine standing out so far, and that's to die for.

<90>Amour de Deutz 1997 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Champagne Vintage Blanc de Blanc 1996

This is shaping up to being a great blanc de blanc vintage, even though the 1996s blended from both Chardonnay and Pinot are definitely superior.

<92>Pol Roger 1996 Brut Chardonnay

<87>Deutz 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Brut

<90>R.C. Lemaire 1996 Chardonnay, Millésime Premier Cru Brut

<90>Pannier 1996 Blanc de Blancs

<90>Bonnaire 1996 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

<89>Jacquart 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Mosaïque

<88>Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Premier Cru Chardonnay, Brut

<88>Louis Brison 1996 Cuvée Tendresse, Brut

<87>Pierre Moncuit 1996 Brut Grand Cru, Blanc de Blancs

<87>Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Fleuron Brut 1er Cru

<87>G. Fluteau 1996 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

<87>Duval-Leroy 1996 Blanc de Chardonnay Brut

<86>Louis Roederer 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut

<85>Michel Gonet 1996 Prestige 2000 Brut Grand Cru

<84>Philippe Gonet 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Grand Cru

<84>Nicolas Feuillatte 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut Premier Cru

Champagne Vintage Blanc de Blanc 1995

Some amazing blanc de blancs are emerging from this vintage.

<95>Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

<91>Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Millésime de Collection (*magnum*)

<91>Amour de Deutz 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

<90>Pol Roger 1995 Brut Chardonnay

<90>Le Mesnil 1995 Réserve Sélection, Blanc de Blancs Brut

<90>Billecart-Salmon 1995 Blanc de Blancs

<90>Drappier 1995 Cuvée Signature, Blanc de Blancs Brut

<89>G. Fluteau 1995 Cuvée Prestige Brut (*magnum*)

<89>Guy Charbaut 1995 Memory

<89>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Mesnil

<89>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Cramant

<88>Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Fleuron Brut 1er Cru

<88>Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Cuvée Oenophile, Extra-Brut

<88>Jacquesson 1995 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru

<88>G. Fluteau 1995 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

<88>Alain Thienot 1995 Cuvée Stanislas, Blanc de Blancs Brut

<87>Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Chouilly

<87>Palmer 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

<86>Terres de Noël, Brut Sélection 1995 Grand Cru, Milan

- <86>**Pierre Moncuit, Cuvée Nicole Moncuit 1995 Vieille Vigne**
- <85>**J. de Telmont 1995 Cuvée Grand Couronnement Brut**
- <85>**A.R. Lenoble 1995 Gentilhomme, Brut Grand Cru**
- <85>**Alexandre Bonnet 1995 Blanc de Blancs, Brut**
- <83>**Th. Blondel 1995 Vieux Millésime Chardonnay**

Champagne Vintage Blanc de Blanc 1993 & older

Only buy older vintages of Champagne that have come direct from the producer's cellars into the wine-merchant's cellars, and only then if you also know that the wine-merchant's own cellars are good. Preferably buy direct from the producer on a visit. Only buy mature Champagne at auction if the provenance adheres to the above or you have tasted the an example from exactly the same lot.

- <97>**Krug Clos du Mesnil 1988 Brut Blanc de Blancs**
- <95>**Dom Ruinart 1993 Blanc de Blancs**
- <93>**Le Mesnil 1990 Vigne Sélectionnée Blanc de Blancs Brut**
- <90>**Jacquart 1992 Blanc de Blancs, Cuvée Mosaïque**
- <90>**Boizel 1989 Joyau de Chardonnay, Cuvée des Auctionnaires**
- <88>**Charles Heidsieck 1990 Blanc des Millénaires, Brut**
- <87>**Salon 1990 Blanc de Blancs Brut**
- <87>**Palmer 1985 Blanc de Blancs Brut**
- <87>**Doquet-Jeanmaire 1985 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru**
- <86>**Palmer 1985 Blanc de Blancs Brut (magnum)**
- <83>**Doquet-Jeanmaire 1986 Coeur de Terroir, Brut 1er Cru**

Champagne Vintage Rosé

Interesting to note that the number of vintaged Champagne rosé submitted dropped by more than 60% over previous years. This happens occasionally, when houses have over-produced during a rosé revival, only to discover it has waned by the time a vintage Champagne reaches the market, some five years later. As the French will drink only the freshest Champagne rosé, the producers switch to selling off these wines as non-vintage, rather than be seen to offer an old vintage, hoping that customers will not notice that the wine is orange!

- <98>**Cuvée Dom Pérignon 1992 Rosé Brut, Moët & Chandon**
- <93>**Gosset Celebris 1998 Rosé Brut**
- <92>**Louis Roederer 1995 Cristal Brut Rosé**
- <91>**Pol Roger 1995 Brut Rosé**
- <90>**Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1990 La Grande Dame Rosé, Brut**
- <90>**Pommery 1992 Louise Rosé, Brut**
- <90>**Perrier-Jouët 1997 Cuvée Belle Epoque Rosé Brut**
- <90>**Bollinger 1995 Grande Année Rosé, Brut**
- <89>**Grand Siècle Alexandra 1990 Brut Rosé par Laurent-Perrier**
- <85>**Alain Thienot 1996 Brut Rosé**
- <85>**Bollinger 1996 Grande Année Rosé, Brut**
- <86>**Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Brut Rosé Réserve**
- <83>**Nicolas Feuillatte 1997 Rosé Brut**

Other French

Other French Brut & Rosé (Non-vintage & vintaged)

All French sparkling wines other than Champagne have been combined, with the Loire taking top honours, but both Alsace and the Loire equally dominant throughout the performance table.

- <89>**Bouvet Ladubay 1999 Tresor, Brut Saumur**
- <82>**Baumard NV Carte Corail, Crémant de Loire Brut Rosé**
- <82>**Bestheim 2000 Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <82>**Champalou NV Vouvray Brut**
- <82>**Domaine de Brizé NV Saumur Brut**
- <82>**Domaine de la Galinière 1998 Cuvée Clément, Vouvray Brut**
- <80>**Baumard NV Carte Turquoise, Crémant de Loire Brut**
- <80>**Baumard 2000 Brut Millésime, Crémant de Loire**
- <80>**Bestheim NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <80>**Château de Moncontour 1999 Cuvée Prédilection Vouvray Brut**
- <80>**Clos de l'Épinay NV Tête de Cuvée, Vouvray Brut**
- <80>**Gratien & Meyer NV Cuvée Flamme, Saumur Brut**
- <80>**Jean Becker NV Crémant d'Alsace**
- <80>**Joseph Freudenreich NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <80>**Koehly NV Blanc de Noirs, Crémant d'Alsace**
- <80>**Wolfberger NV Cuvée de l'An 2000 Brut (*Magnum*)**
- <79>**C. Greffe NV Tête de Cuvée, Vouvray Brut**
- <79>**CP de Vouvray NV Tête de Cuvée Brut**
- <79>**Gratien & Meyer NV Brut Rosé, Saumur**
- <79>**Jean Geiler NV Blanc de Blancs Brut Prestige**
- <79>**Joseph Gruss NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <79>**René Muré 1997 Cuvée Prestige Brut**
- <79>**Stoffel NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <79>**Yves Lambert NV Brut Rosé, Crémant de Loire**
- <78>**CV de Kientzheim-Kaysersberg NV Anne Boecklin Brut**
- <78>**CV de Saumur NV Cuvée de la Chevalerie Brut**
- <78>**Domaine de Brizé NV Brut Rosé, Saumur**
- <78>**Domaine de Nerleux NV Crémant de Loire Brut**
- <78>**Domaine Dutertre 2000 Cuvée Vendanges Brut**
- <78>**Dopff Au Moulin 1999 Cuvée Bartholdi Brut**
- <78>**Engel Fernand NV Tradition Brut**
- <78>**Hartenberger NV Blanc de Blancs Brut**
- <78>**Jean Geiler Médaille d'Or Paris 2000 NV Brut**
- <78>**Jean-Claude Buecher NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <78>**Meyer Fonné NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut Extra**
- <78>**Monmousseau NV Cuvée JM Brut, Touraine**
- <77>**Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Laurance, Saumur Brut**
- <77>**Château de Montguéret NV Crémant de Loire Brut**
- <77>**Domaine du Clos de l'Épinay NV Vouvray Brut**
- <77>**Domaine Dutertre NV Brut Rosé, Crémant de Loire**
- <77>**Dopff & Irion NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut**
- <77>**Dopff Au Moulin NV Cuvée Pierre Dopff Brut**

<77>Eblin Fuchs NV Blanc de Noirs Brut
 <77>François Schwach NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <77>Jean Geiler NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <77>Langlois NV Saumur Brut
 <77>Mayerling NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <77>Sipp Mack NV Crémant d'Alsace
 <77>Wolfberger NV Cuvée Prestige Brut
 <76>Camille Braun NV Riesling, Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Chapelle de Cray 1998 Brut Vintage, Montlouis
 <76>Château de Putille NV Crémant de Loire Brut
 <76>CV de Hunawihl NV Calixte, Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Domaine Claude Bléger NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Dopff Au Moulin NV Cuvée Julien Brut
 <76>Emile Beyer NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Engel Fernand 1999 Chardonnay Brut
 <76>Joseph Gruss NV Brut Prestige
 <76>Louis Sipp 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Lucien Albrecht NV Riesling, Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Ruhmann NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Schaeffer-Woerly 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <76>Schaller NV Blanc de Noir, Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <75>Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Laurance Brut
 <75>Ackerman Laurance NV Vouvray Brut
 <75>Barth René 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut, Michel Fonné
 <75>Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Crémant de Loire Brut
 <75>Château de Montguéret 1998 Tête de Cuvée Brut
 <75>CV de Hunawihl NV Calixte Brut Rosé
 <75>de Neuville NV Cuvée Prestige Brut
 <75>Domaine de la Perruche NV Saumur Brut
 <75>Domaine Laffond NV Blanquette de Limoux
 <75>Dopff Au Moulin 1998 Chardonnay Brut
 <75>Langlois NV Crémant de Loire Brut
 <75>Mirault NV Vouvray Brut
 <75>Rieflé NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <75>Stempfél NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <75>Veuve Amiot 1995 Cuvée Elisabeth, Saumur Brut
 <75>Welty NV Brut Rosé, Crémant d'Alsace
 <75>Yves Lambert NV Crémant de Loire Brut
 <74>Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Privée Brut
 <74>Bernard Humbrecht NV Cuvée des Amis
 <74>Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Louis de Grenelle Brut
 <74>Charles Baur NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut
 <74>Château de Moncontour NV Crémant de Loire Brut
 <74>CV de Saumur 1999 Cuvée de la Chevalerie Brut Rosé
 <74>Koehly NV Crémant St-Urbain, Crémant d'Alsace
 <74>Odile et Danielle Weber NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

<74>Varichon & Clerc 1997 Royal Seyssel, Brut
<73>Domaine Hervé Duloquet NV Saumur Brut
<72>Blanc Foussy NV Touraine Brut
<72>CP de Vouvray NV Extra Réserve Brut
<72>Château de Moncontour 1995 Cuvée Prédilection Brut
<72>Gratien & Meyer NV Saumur Brut
<70>Gratien & Meyer NV Crémant de Loire Brut
<70>Veuve Amiot NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Argentina

See South America

Australia

Australian Brut & Rosé (Non-vintage & vintaged)

The presence of a vintage on an Australian fizz usually represents a step up in terms of quality, although there is no legal obligation, and any variation in the different years is more likely to be attributed to learning curves than climatic conditions.

<90>Croser 1999 Petaluma
<89>Croser 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay
<88>Pirie 1995 Pipers Brook
<87>Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut
<87>Chandon 1998 Blanc de Blancs
<87>Chandon 1998 Rosé
<87>Green Point by Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut
<87>Pirie 1996 Pipers Brook
<87>Yarrabank 1994 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut
<86>Chandon 1997 Cuvée Riche
<86>Pirie 1997 Pipers Brook
<85>Jansz of Tasmania 1996 Pipers River Cuvée Brut
<85>Yarrabank 1998 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut
<84>Chandon NV Brut
<81>Arras 1997 Chardonnay Pinot Noir
<81>Green Point by Chandon 1997 Vintage Brut Rosé
<80>Blue Pyrenees 1998 Chardonnay Pinot Noir Pinot Meunier
<80>Blue Pyrenees 1998 Midnight Cuvée Chardonnay
<80>Kamberra Tumbarumba 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay
<80>Meeting Place 2000 Pinot Noir Chardonnay, Kamberra
<80>Jansz of Tasmania 1996
<80>Yalumba 1997 D Brut
<80>Starvedog Lane 1998 Sparkling Chardonnay Pinot Noir Pinot Meunier
<80>Yarrabank 1997 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut
<80>Yarrabank 1997 Cuvée Pinot Noir Chardonnay
<80>Yarrabank 1997 Sparkling
<79>Arras 1995 Pinot Noir Chardonnay
<79>Jansz of Tasmania NV

<78>Bethany Wines 1998 Barossa Cuvée Chardonnay Pinot Noir Brut
 <87>Chandon 1999 Vintage Brut
 <78>Omni NV Brut
 <78>Sir James 1997 Vintage Pinot Noir Chardonnay
 <78>Brown Brothers NV King Valley Sparkling Pinot Noir & Chardonnay
 <78>Brown Brothers 1996 Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut, Milawa Vineyard
 <78>Grant Burge NV Barossa Valley Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut
 <78>La Cache 1995
 <78>Seaview 1999 Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs, Vintage Reserve Brut
 <78>Seaview 1994 Section 353 Pinot Chardonnay
 <77>Nottage Hill 1999 Riverland Sparkling Chardonnay Brut
 <77>Yarra Burn 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay Pinot Meunier
 <77>Brown Brothers 1996 King Valley Whitlands Pinot Chardonnay Brut
 <77>Green Point by Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut Rosé
 <77>Seaview 1998 Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
 <76>Currabridge NV Brut
 <76>Currabridge NV Rosé Brut
 <76>Jacob's Creek NV Chardonnay Pinot Noir Brut Cuvée
 <75>Bimbadgen Estate NV Hunter Valley Sparkling Pinot Noir Chardonnay
 <75>Bay of Fires 1997 Pinot Noir Chardonnay
 <75>Brown Brothers 1998 Pinot Noir Chardonnay, Milawa Vineyard
 <75>Chandon 1997 Blanc de Noirs
 <75>Aldridge Estate NV Sparkling Brut
 <75>Macedon NV Cuvée 8
 <75>Rosemount NV "V" Sparkling Chardonnay
 <74>Macedon NV Cuvée 6
 <74>Yellowglen NV Pinot Noir Chardonnay Grande Cuvée
 <73>Hollick 1998 Sparkling Merlot
 <72>Deakin Estate NV Brut
 <72>Yellowglen 1998 Vintage

Australian: sparkling red

This is very much Australia's own style of sparkling wine. Most wines in this category are sparkling Shiraz, but you can get fizzed up versions of Cabernet, Merlot and various blends. The appearance of Pinot Noir is a rarity, especially in its pure form, which is odd since the first Australian red fizz was a "Sparkling Burgundy" back in 1881. The wines today are generally on the sweet side, very deep in colour and fall into one of two categories: cedary-oaky or fruit-driven. The sight of anything this colour with bubbles can give those brought up on Champagne a shock and this is only made worse by the big smack of tannin encountered in those sparkling red wines of the cedary-oaky style. Champagne drinkers who refuse to consider anything other than the genuine article will be brought within a mile of these wines, but those who are positively interested in the development of sparkling wines beyond the confines of northern France should at least try to understand Australian sparkling red wine. Although the bulk of Aussie red fizz is seen as nothing more (or anything less) than barbecue fodder, there is something of a cult-following for the very best wines.

<90>Glaetzer NV Sparkling Shiraz

<89>Charles Melton NV Sparkling Red
 <88>Chandon NV Pinot Shiraz
 <88>Yalumba 1996 D Black, Sparkling Cabernet Shiraz
 <87>Primo Estate 2001 Joseph Sparkling Red
 <86>Chandon NV Sparkling Pinot Noir Shiraz
 <85>Hollick 1999 Sparkling Merlot
 <80>Bleasdale NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <80>The Peppermint Paddock NV Red Chambourcin
 <80>Black Queen 1994
 <80>Knappstein 1999 Chainsaw Shiraz
 <80>Rumball NV Sparkling Merlot
 <80>Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz Special Cuvée
 <80>Seppelt 1996 Sparkling Shiraz
 <80>Tatachilla NV Sparkling Malbec
 <78>Bersano NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce
 <78>Bleasdale 2001 Sparkling Shiraz
 <78>Banrock Station NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <78>Brown Brothers 1998 Sparkling Shiraz, Milawa Vineyard
 <76>Leasingham Classic Clare 1994 Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Sir James NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Andrew Garrett 1998 Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Wingara 2000 Select Sparkling Shiraz
 <75>Barossa Valley Estate 1996 E & E Sparkling Shiraz
 <75>Gibson's NV Sparkling Merlot
 <75>Morris NV Sparkling Shiraz Durif
 <75>Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <73>Miranda 1997 Family Reserve Sparkling Shiraz

Brazil

See South America

England

England's climate is every bit as variable as Champagne's and the White Cliffs of Dover are part of the same chalk basin that extends under Channel and Paris to emerge in Champagne as the Côte des Blancs. Consequently, it is little wonder that sparkling wine is England's great wine hope. Furthermore, the English deliberately put the bubbles into wine long before the French did. This was documented by Christopher Merret in 1662, six years before Dom Pérignon set foot in Hautvillers, which explains why sparkling Champagne was famous enough to be mentioned in wax The Man of Mode (Sir George Etherege, 1676), 43 years before the French claim to have invented it! Merret's document was reproduced for the first time in Christie's World Encyclopedia of Champagne & Sparkling Wine.

<90>Nyetimber 1998 Premier Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
 <89>Nyetimber 1999 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <89>Nyetimber 1996 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <89>Nyetimber 1993 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <89>Nyetimber 1992 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs

<88>Nyetimber 1999 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
 <88>Nyetimber 1997 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <88>Nyetimber 1993 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
 <88>Bloomsbury 1997 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate
 <87>Limney Brut 1999 Davenport
 <87>Nyetimber 1998 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <87>Nyetimber 1995 Classic Cuvée Brut
 <87>Knightsbridge 1999 Cuvée Merret, Ridgeview Estate
 <85>Limney Brut 2000 Davenport
 <85>Nyetimber 1995 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
 <85>South Ridge 1999 Cuvée Merret, Ridgeview Estate
 <85>Cavendish 1998 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate
 <80>Bearsted 1997 Brut
 <80>Chapel Down 1999 Pinot Réserve
 <78>Breaky Bottom 1999 Cuvée Réserve Brut
 <78>Breaky Bottom 1996 Millennium Cuvée Maman Mercier
 <78>Camel Valley 2001 Cornwall Pinot Noir
 <78>Chapel Down NV Epoch Brut Rosé
 <77>Danebury 1999 Cossack, Brut
 <75>Danebury 1998 Cossack, Brut
 <75>Chapel Down 1995 Epoch Vintage Brut
 <74>Camel Valley 2001 Cornwall Brut
 <74>Camel Valley 2000 Cornwall Brut
 <74>Camel Valley 1998 Cornwall Brut
 <74>Chapel Down NV Epoch Brut
 <71>Test Valley Vineyard NV Seyval Blanc Premium Reserve Brut
 <70>Warden Vineyard 1996 Extra Brut

Germany

Sekt has historically appealed to Germans and few others. Production is enormous, more than twice that of Champagne, but most of this is blended from the dregs of several countries and very little is exported. Until 1986 Deutscher Sekt was a oxymoron, but now has to be the exclusive product of German wine. Smaller producers have always existed, but the quality of their wines was little better than that of the biggest bottlers until recently. Riesling makes a classic Sekt, but not a classic sparkling wine. Its terpene-laden character overwhelms the subtle influence of autolysis, thus no sparkling wine made from this variety will ever achieve classic bottle-fermented aromas. What it will achieve, however, is what any good still Riesling can accomplish and that is a classic Riesling bottle-aroma. Call it petrolly or what you like, but this usually takes a few years after disgorgement, hence a certain maturity is required. A Champagne-lover who is also a Riesling-lover should enjoy a mature Riesling Sekt if preconceived notions of what a sparkling wine should be are put to one side.

<90>Solter 1988 Rheingau Riesling Brut
 <82>Lingenfelder NV Satyr Brut
 <82>Ökonomierat Rebholz 1997 Spätburgunder Brut
 <82>Solter NV Rheingau Riesling Brut
 <80>Georg Breuer 1994 Georg Breuer Brut

<80>Reichsrat von Buhl 1997 Forster Pechstein Riesling
 <79>Castell'sches Domänenamt NV Schloss Castell Riesling Brut
 <79>Von Kageneck'sche 1999 Bugginger Maltesergarten Spätburgunder
 <78>Johann Geil 1999 Bechtheimer Hasensprung Weissburgunder
 <78>Grafen Neipperg 2000 Riesling Brut
 <78>Reichsrat von Buhl 1998 Weissburgunder Extra Brut
 <78>Schloss Reinhartshausen 1998 Erbacher Rheinhell Chardonnay
 <77>Winzergenossenschaft Beckstein 2000 Riesling Trocken
 <77>Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt 1995 Palais Kesselstatt Riesling
 <76>Georg Breuer 1999 Riesling Brut
 <76>Hessische Staatsweingüter Kloster Eberbach 1999 Erbacher Marcobrunn Riesling
 <76>Göttelmann 1999 Münsterer Kapellenberg Riesling Trocken
 <76>Ratzenberger 1998 Bacharacher Kloster Fürstental Riesling
 <76>Staatliche Weinbaudomäne Trier 2000 Domäne Avelsbach Riesling
 <76>Sektellerei Am Turm 2000 Turm Carat Brut
 <76>Schloss Vollrads 1999 Riesling Brut
 <76>Winzersekt 2000 Spätburgunder Extra Trocken Weissherbst
 <75>Geil's Sekt und 1999 Schwarzriesling Brut Rosé
 <75>Fürst von Metternich Sektellerei 1999 Riesling Brut
 <75>Schloss Saarstein 1998 Riesling Brut
 <75>Sonnenhof, Bezner-Fischer 2000 Spätburgunder Brut Rosé
 <75>Sektellerei Am Turm NV Turm Rubin Spätburgunder Trocken
 <74>Franz Friedrich-Kern 1999 Cuvée Katharina Riesling Brut
 <74>Lauffen 1999 Lauffener Katzenbeisser Spätburgunder Trocken
 <74>Staatsweingut Meersburg 1999 Baden Brut
 <74>Vereinigte Hospitien 1999 Riesling Brut
 <74>Volk 1999 Steuermann Riesling Brut
 <74>im Zwölberich 1998 Zwölberich Royal Brut
 <73>Schloss Saarstein 1997 Riesling Trocken
 <72>Alfred Blaul, Hofgut Gönheim NV Pinot Extra Brut
 <72>Bickensohl 1999 Spätburgunder Brut
 <72>Deidesheim 1999 Pfalz Trocken
 <72>Fries 1998 Novianer Klosterberg Riesling Halbtrocken
 <72>Neuweier-Bühlertal 2000 Neuweierer Schloss Rodeck Riesling Trocken

Israel

The quality of these sparkling wines from the Golan Heights improves with every vintage.

<78>Yarden NV Brut Galilee
 <77>Yarden 1997 Blanc de Blancs
 <76>Yarden 1998 Blanc de Blancs
 <70>Yarden 1996 Blanc de Blancs

Italy

The best response as always has come from Franciacorta, one of the few places in the world where high quality sparkling wine can be made in large volumes. At long last I am receiving full

cooperation from Asti and Brachetto d'Acqui, thus the significant number of wines recommended from those appellations.

Franciacorta

The only Italian sparkling wine appellation that must be made by méthode champenoise. Franciacorta also happens to be the only compact wine area producing world class sparkling wine in Italy. Why hasn't a Champagne house set down some roots here? Franciacorta would be the ideal location for a Taittinger operation like Domaine Carneros.

Franciacorta Extra-Brut

- <80>**Ricci Curbastro 1998 Franciacorta Extra Brut**
- <79>**Lo Sparviere NV Franciacorta Extra Brut**
- <77>**Castel Faglia NV Franciacorta Extra Brut**
- <76>**Ferghettina 1995 Franciacorta Extra Brut**
- <75>**Cola NV Franciacorta Extra Brut**
- <75>**Barboglio DeGaioncelli NV Franciacorta Extra Dry**
- <74>**Bredasole NV Franciacorta Extra Brut**

Franciacorta Brut

- <85>**Barone Pizzini 1999 Franciacorta Satèn**
- <84>**Ricci Curbastro 1999 Franciacorta Satèn Brut**
- <83>**Bellavista 1997 Franciacorta, Gran Cuvée Brut**
- <83>**Villa 1999 Franciacorta Satèn Brut**
- <82>**Bellavista NV Franciacorta, Gran Cuvée Satèn**
- <82>**Monogram 1994 Franciacorta Brut Millesimato**
- <80>**Antica Fratta 1995 Franciacorta Brut**
- <80>**Antica Fratta NV Franciacorta Satèn Brut**
- <80>**Bredasole 2000 Franciacorta Satèn**
- <80>**Ca'del Bosco 1995 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi**
- <79>**Il Mosnel 1998 Franciacorta Brut Satèn**
- <78>**Barone Pizzini NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <78>**Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Brut**
- <78>**Conti Bettoni Cazzago 1994 Tetellus, Franciacorta Brut**
- <77>**Bredasole NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <77>**Tenuta Castellino Bonomi 1998 Franciacorta Brut**
- <77>**Tenuta Castellino Bonomi 1996 Franciacorta Millesimato**
- <77>**Contadi Castaldi 1997 Franciacorta Satèn**
- <76>**Il Mosnel NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <75>**Antica Fratta NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <75>**Bellavista NV Franciacorta Cuvée Brut**
- <75>**Fratelli Berlucchi 1995 Casa delle Colonne, Franciacorta**
- <75>**Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Dosage Zéro**
- <75>**Conti Bettoni Cazzago NV Tetellus, Franciacorta Brut**
- <75>**Cola NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <75>**Mirabella NV Franciacorta Brut Rosé**
- <74>**Barone Pizzini 1998 Franciacorta, Cuvée Bagnadore**

- <74>**Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Satèn Brut**
- <74>**Ca'del Bosco NV Franciacorta Brut**
- <74>**Cavalleri 1998 Franciacorta Brut Satèn, Blanc de Blancs**
- <74>**Cavalleri 1998 Franciacorta Pas Dosé, Blanc de Blancs**
- <74>**Cola 1998 Franciacorta Brut**
- <74>**Cornaletto 1997 Franciacorta Rosé Brut**
- <74>**Lantieri NV Franciacorta Satèn**
- <73>**Cà dei Frati 1998 Cuvée dei Frati, Brut**

Asti & Brachetto

Not as exciting as last year, but at least the Fontanafredda demonstrates that some big producers can compete at the highest quality level.

- <88>**Fontanafredda 2001 Asti Millesimato**
- <87>**Arione NV Asti Dolce**
- <87>**Vigne Regali NV Asti, Spumante Dolce**
- <84>**Capetta NV Asti Dolce**
- <80>**Bava NV Malvasia di Castelnuovo don Bosco, Rosé Dolce**
- <80>**Bera 2001 Cascina Palazzo Asti**
- <80>**Bersano NV Asti Dolce**
- <70>**Bersano 1998 Arturo Bersano, Riserva Brut**

New Zealand

This country vies with Australia's Tasmania as the greatest potential sparkling wine area in the Southern Hemisphere. Although the Northern Hemisphere's Loire and Burgundy regions share the same potential, they do not exploit it to the same degree. Sparkling wine producers in New Zealand and Tasmania enthusiastic and ambitious. It will be interesting to see which of these Southern Hemisphere fizz regions eventually comes out on top as the fight it out over the next couple of decades.

- <90>**Montana Deutz 1996 Blanc de Blancs**
- <90>**Saveé 2000 Sparkling Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough**
- <88>**Kim Crawford Rory 1996 Brut**
- <88>**Hunter's 1998 Brut**
- <86>**Vic. Williams Selection 1997 Marlborough**
- <85>**Vic. Williams Selection 1998 Marlborough**
- <85>**Lindauer NV Special Reserve**
- <85>**Montana Deutz NV Marlborough Cuvée**
- <80>**Cuvée Virginie 1997 Marlborough**
- <80>**Miru Miru 1999 Brut**
- <80>**Morton Estate NV Premium Brut**
- <80>**Chauvet NV Brut**
- <80>**Soljans Estate 1998 Legacy Brut**
- <78>**Pelorus NV Marlborough**
- <78>**Lindauer NV Brut**
- <77>**Daniel No.1 NV Brut**
- <75>**Voyage Special Cuvée Brut NV Giesen**
- <75>**Lindauer NV Rosé**

<75>**Fusion NV Hawkes Bay**

<74>**Elstree 1997 Brut**

South Africa

For the second consecutive year two Cap Classique wines have matched the quality of a very good Champagne. Graham Beck's Synergy is also the highest-scoring Cap Classique, while two other cuvées are within spitting distance of the magical 85-point barrier. The only problem - and it is a huge one - is that one producer is dominating the field. As stated in the previous edition, Cap Classique has the potential to develop internationally, but it won't do so until there are at least ten-times as many producers as there are now. First there was Nicky Krone, who achieved great things in the vintages of the early-1990s, but he has had many setback that I am amazed that he is still fighting away. Hopefully he won't lose his bottle [in-joke: sorry!] now that his crown has been snatched by Pieter Ferreira of Graham Beck. But only when there is a critical mass of Cap Classique producers, will they be able to push each other forward and will we will begin to know what the true potential is. This does not diminish the achievements of either Pieter or Nicky. On the contrary, it is even more impressive that they have reached this standard in isolation.

<88>**Graham Beck 2000 Synergy, Cap Classique**

<85>**Graham Beck 1994 Pinot Noir-Chardonnay Brut (magnum)**

<84>**Graham Beck 1996 Brut Blanc de Blancs, Cap Classique**

<83>**Graham Beck 1997 Brut Blanc de Blancs, Cap Classique**

<80>**Graham Beck NV Chardonnay-Pinot Noir Brut, Cap Classique**

<77>**Tribal NV South African Sparkling Wine**

South America

Interesting to see Brazil beating Argentina, albeit in a sweet style and submissions limited to Chandon this year. Good news and bad news about South American fizz: the good news is that Chandon has given up selling domestic fizz as Champaña in Brazil and Champahna in Argentina (it only took them over 30 years to stop abusing their own name), but the bad news is that Henri Piper in Argentina is still sold as Champahna (Piper-Heidsieck has sold the company, but still owns the name and drives revenues from sales, so the hypocrisy continues).

<80>**Chandon Brasil NB Passion**

<75>**Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. NV Rosé**

<75>**Chandon Argentina NV Brut**

<73>**Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. 1999 Brut Nature Millésimé**

<72>**Chandon Brasil NV Demi Sec**

<71>**Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. NV Extra Brut**

Spain

There are Cava fans out there who think that I hate Cava unless it has been crafted in the style of a Champagne, but I'm a Cava-sceptic, not a Cava-hater and I am perfectly willing to acknowledge quality in a Cava produced from Parellada, Macabéo and Xarel.lo grapes. The fact that most of the very best Cavas have been produced from Champagne grapes, whether pure or blended is hardly surprising: these varieties have established their credential as the best for sparkling wine throughout the world. Cava's so-called traditional grapes have not. Traditional

Cava fans who revere these three vin ordinaire varieties often accuse me of bias, but they tend to overlook the fact that I actually recommend more traditionally-based products than Chardonnay-based Cavas. It would be strange if I didn't. I taste hundreds of Cava every year and most are made from Parellada, Macabéo and Xarel.lo, thus it is inevitable that the majority of my recommendations are old-school Cava.

Cava Brut Nature

Brut Nature is restricted to a maximum of three grams per litre of residual sugar. In the last edition I pointed out that I had never recommended so many Brut Nature in any category of sparkling wine, including Champagne. This year I have recommended half as many again!

- <80>**Oriol Rossell NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <78>**Ferret Reserva Antiga 1998 Cava Brut Nature Reserva**
- <78>**Torre Galimany NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <78>**Kripta Gran Reserva 1997 Cava Brut Nature**
- <78>**Vallformosa 1999 Cava Brut Nature**
- <77>**Castell d'Age Poculum Boni Genit NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <77>**Torrents Carbo 1998 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva**
- <77>**Gradiva NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <77>**Castell de Vilarnau 2000 Cava Chardonnay Brut Nature**
- <76>**Torrents Carbo 1998 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva**
- <76>**Duc de Foix 1999 Cava Brut Nature**
- <75>**Maria Casanovas 1999 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva**
- <75>**Marques de Gelida Gran Selecció 1996 Cava Brut Nature**
- <75>**Gramona, III Llustros 1997 Cava Brut Nature**
- <75>**Eudald Massana Noya 1998 Cava Brut Nature**
- <75>**Mont-Ferrant Blanes Nature NV Cava Extra Brut**
- <75>**Elias i Terns NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <75>**Torre Oria 1998 Cava Brut Nature**
- <74>**Huguet 1999 Cava Brut Nature**
- <74>**Gran Claustro 2000 Cava Brut Nature**
- <70>**Grimau Reserva Familiar NV Cava Brut Nature**
- <70>**Sumarroca 1999 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva**
- <70>**Sumarroca 1997 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva**
- <70>**Parató NV Cava Brut Nature**

Cava Extra-Brut

Extra-Brut may have up to six grams per litre of residual sugar. Only one recommendation this year and no coincidence I suspect that it is Masblanc again.

- <77>**Masblanc NV Cava Extra Brut**

Cava Brut

In the last edition the four highest scoring Cava Brut were all non-vintage, the year before the three highest-scoring Cavas were non-vintage, and here we can see that no less than six of the top seven are not vintaged. Are Cava producers beginning to understand the usefulness of blending wines from different years or are these wines essentially from individual vintages, but released younger?

<85>Freixenet Trépat 1998 Cava Brut
 <82>Freixenet NV Rosado
 <82>Extremarium Brut de Mont-Marçal NV Cava Brut
 <80>Chandon NV Cava Reserva Brut
 <80>Anna de Codorníu NV Cava Brut
 <80>Rimat NV Cava Gran Brut
 <80>Rimat Chardonnay NV Cava Brut
 <80>Juvé & Camps 1997 Cava Millesimé Brut
 <80>Oriol Rossell NV Cava Brut
 <80>Castillo de Perelada NV Cava Brut Reserva
 <78>Aretay 2000 Cava Brut Reserva
 <78>Huguet 1999 Cava Reserva Brut Classic
 <78>Ferret NV Cava Brut
 <78>Marques de Monistrol NV Reserva Selección Especial
 <78>Marques de Monistrol NV Gran Reserva de la Familia Rosado
 <78>Segura Viudas NV Cava Gran Brut
 <78>Vallformosa NV Cava Brut
 <78>Vallformosa 2000 Cava Brut Rosé
 <78>Castell de Vilarnau NV Cava Brut
 <76>Castell d'Age 1998 Cava Brut
 <75>Lacrima Baccus Primerisimo Gran Cuvée 1999 Cava Brut
 <75>Marques de Monistrol 1997 Cava Gran Reserva Privada Brut
 <75>Raventós i Blanc 1998 Cava Brut
 <70>Aretay NV Cava Brut

United States of America

California was the first New World area the champenois chose to establish a serious méthode champenoise operation, when Moët established Domaine Chandon in 1973. This state still leads the way, but with Washington and Oregon in the wings.

<90>Domaine Carneros 1995 Le Rêve, Blanc de Blancs Brut
 <90>L'Ermitage 1996 Brut, Roederer Estate
 <88>DVX by Mumm Cuvée Napa 1996 Brut
 <87>Argyle 1997 Brut
 <87>Argyle 1996 Knudsen Vineyard Brut
 <85>Iron Horse 1997 Classic Vintage Brut
 <85>J 1997 Brut
 <85>Mountain Dome 1997 Brut
 <85>Roederer Estate NV Brut
 <84>Roederer Estate NV Brut Rosé
 <83>Domaine Carneros 1998 Brut
 <82>Domaine Carneros 1998 Brut
 <82>Domaine Carneros 1997 Brut
 <82>Mumm Cuvée Napa 1996 Vintage Reserve Brut
 <81>Schramsberg 1998 Blanc de Blancs
 <80>Gloria Ferrer NV Blanc de Noirs
 <80>Gruet 1997 Blanc de Blancs

<80>Iron Horse 1994 Blanc de Blancs
 <80>J 1995 Brut (*magnum*)
 <80>Mumm Cuvée Napa NV Blanc de Noirs Brut
 <80>Schramsberg 1996 J. Schram
 <80>Mirabelle NV Brut, Schramsberg
 <79>Piper Sonoma NV Select Cuvée, Blanc de Noir
 <79>Schramsberg 1998 Blanc de Noirs
 <78>Gruet NV Brut Blanc de Noirs
 <78>Mumm Cuvée Napa 1997 Blanc de Blancs Brut
 <78>Schramsberg 1999 Brut Rosé
 <77>Gruet 1998 Grande Réserve
 <77>Iron Horse 1998 Wedding Cuvée
 <77>Iron Horse 1992 Brut LD
 <77>Mumm Cuvée Napa NV Brut Prestige
 <77>Pacific Echo 1996 Blanc de Blancs
 <76>Pacific Echo NV Brut
 <75>Iron Horse 1996 Brut Rosé
 <75>Pacific Echo 1997 Brut Rosé
 <74>Gloria Ferrer NV Brut

By style

A comparison of some sweeter styles and red sparkling wines from across the board.

Sec & Extra-Sec of all abodes

Champagne comes out on top, but Germany acquits itself well.

<87>Louis Roederer NV Rich Sec
 <85>E. Barnaut NV Cuvée Douceur, Sec Grand Cru
 <82>Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Rosé Sec, Saumur
 <80>Moët & Chandon NV White Star Extra Dry
 <77>Winzergenossenschaft Beckstein 2000 Riesling Trocken
 <76>Göttelmann 1999 Münsterer Kapellenberg Riesling
 Trocken
 <76>Erzeugergemeinschaft Winzersekt 2000 Spätburgunder Extra Trocken Weissherbst
 <75>Barboglio DeGaioncelli NV Franciacorta Extra Dry
 <75>Sektellerei Am Turm NV Turm Rubin Spätburgunder Trocken
 <74>Weingärtnergenossenschaft Lauffen 1999 Lauffener Katzenbeisser Spätburgunder
 Trocken
 <73>Schloss Saarstein 1997 Riesling Trocken
 <72>Winzerverein Deidesheim 1999 Pfalz Trocken
 <72>Winzergenossenschaft Neuweier-Bühlertal 2000 Neuweierer Schloss Rodeck Riesling
 Trocken

Demi-Sec or sweet styles of all abodes

Again Champagne wins through, but with Loire rather than Germany the second most successful wine region.

<88>Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Rich Réserve

<87>Pol Roger NV Rich Special Demi-Sec
<85>G.H. Mumm NV Demi-Sec
<82>Oudinot NV Medium-Dry
<80>Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Mousseux
<80>Gruet NV Demi-Sec
<80>Schramsberg 1999 Crémant Demi-Sec
<77>Mas des Combes NV Gaillac Demi-Sec
<76>Veuve Amiot NV Demi-Sec Saumur
<75>Veuve Amiot NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Mousseux
<72>Blanc Foussy NV Demi-Sec Touraine
<72>Chandon Brasil NV Demi Sec
<72>Fries 1998 Novlander Klosterberg Riesling Halbtrocken
<72>CV de Saumur NV Cuvée Habit Pourpre, Rouge Demi-Sec
<72>Chandon Brasil NV Demi Sec

Intensely sweet styles of all abodes

As expected, almost totally dominated by Asti and Brachetto.

<88>Fontanafredda 2001 Asti Millesimato
<87>Arione NV Asti Dolce
<87>Vigne Regali NV Asti, Spumante Dolce
<85>Duchessa Lia NV Brachetto d'Acqui, Spumante Dolce
<84>Capetta NV Asti Dolce
<83>Aimery Méthode Ancestrale NV Suave et Fruité, Tête de Cuvée
<80>Arione NV Piemonte Brachetto Dolce
<80>Bava NV Malvasia di Castelnuovo don Bosco, Rosé Dolce
<80>Bera 2001 Cascina Palazzo Asti
<80>Bersano NV Asti Dolce
<80>Chandon Brasil NB Passion
<80>Dezzani NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce
<78>Bersano NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce
<78>Fontanafredda 2001 Acqui, Brachetto d'Acqui

Sparkling reds of all abodes

Dominated by Australia, as might be expected.

<90>Glaetzer NV Sparkling Shiraz
<89>Charles Melton NV Sparkling Red
<88>Chandon NV Pinot Shiraz
<88>Yalumba 1996 D Black, Sparkling Cabernet Shiraz
<87>Primo Estate 2001 Joseph Sparkling Red
<86>Chandon NV Sparkling Pinot Noir Shiraz
<85>Duchessa Lia NV Brachetto d'Acqui, Spumante Dolce
<85>Hollick 1999 Sparkling Merlot
<83>Aimery, La Méthode Ancestrale NV Suave et Fruité, Tête de Cuvée
<80>Ackerman Laurance NV Rouge Cuvée Royale, Vins Mousseux
<80>Arione NV Piemonte Brachetto Dolce

<80>Bleasdale NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <80>Knappstein 1999 Chainsaw Shiraz
 <80>The Peppermint Paddock NV Red Chambourcin
 <80>Dezzani NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce
 <80>Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Mousseux
 <80>Black Queen 1994
 <80>Rumball NV Sparkling Merlot
 <80>Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz Special Cuvée
 <80>Seppelt 1996 Sparkling Shiraz
 <80>Tatachilla NV Sparkling Malbec
 <78>Bersano NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce
 <78>Bleasdale 2001 Sparkling Shiraz
 <78>Banrock Station NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <78>Brown Brothers 1998 Sparkling Shiraz, Milawa Vineyard
 <78>Fontanafredda 2001 Acqui, Brachetto d'Acqui
 <76>Leasingham Classic Clare 1994 Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Sir James NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Sir James NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Andrew Garrett 1998 Sparkling Shiraz
 <76>Wingara 2000 Select Sparkling Shiraz
 <75>Barossa Valley Estate 1996 E & E Sparkling Shiraz
 <75>Graham Beck NV Pinotage Sparkling Red, Cap Classique
 <75>Gibson's NV Sparkling Merlot
 <75>Morris NV Sparkling Shiraz Durif
 <75>Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz
 <75>Yalumba 1996 D Black
 <75>Veuve Amiot NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Mousseux
 <73>Miranda 1997 Family Reserve Sparkling Shiraz
 <72>CV de Saumur NV Cuvée Habit Pourpre, Rouge Demi-Sec

2003 A-Z of Tasting Notes

Abelé

Champagne Henri Abele
 50 rue de Sillery
 51051 Reims
 France

Phone (326) 87.79.80

Fax (326) 87.79.81

Abelé used to be a good value source of toasty-rich Champagnes, but the following is not much to show for the wines tasted. You can buy better sparkling wines cheaper from its parent company Freixenet, and regular readers will know that I'm not exactly a fan of Cava, so that's saying something. A pity.

<84>

Henri Abelé NV Brut

Fresh and creamy Bartlett pears.

Drink now-2005.

Ackermann-Laurance

19 rue Léopold Palustre
St-Hilaire-St-Florent
49400 Saumur
France

Phone (241) 53.03.21

Fax (241) 53.03.29

Part of Remy-Pannier, which was taken over by an alliance of five Loire cooperatives in 2002.

<75>

Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Laurance, Crémant de Loire Brut

Fresh and fruity. A good gulp.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Privée, Crémant de Loire Brut

Fresh, clean and rich.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Ackerman Laurance NV Cuvée Laurance, Saumur Brut

Creamy-citrusy aromas, with a clean expression of Chenin fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2004.

<75>

Ackerman Laurance NV Vouvray Brut

Fresh, clean, elegant.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Ackerman Laurance NV Rouge Cuvée Royale, Vin Mousseux

Very fruity aromas, sweet and rich. Ideal for anyone who is used to drinking Oz sparkling Shiraz wants to get into fizzy French wines.

Drink upon purchase.

Adam-Garnotel

Champagne Adam-Garnotel
15 rue de Chigny
51500 Rilly-la-Montagne
France

Phone (326) 03.40.22

Fax (326) 03.44.47

<84>

Adam-Garnotel NV Brut Tradition

Copper-tinged, very young and fresh with some sherbety fruit on finish.

Drink now-2005.

Age

Castell d'Age

Carretera de Martorell a Capellades, 6-8

La Beguda Baixa

08782 Barcelona

Spain

Phone (93) 7725181

Fax (93) 7727061

<76>

Castell d'Age 1998 Cava Brut

Some finesse.

Drink now-2004.

<77>

Castell d'Age Poculum Boni Genit NV Cava Brut Nature

Big, rich and exceptionally full-flavoured for a Cava. Good acidity. More character, though, than finesse.

Drink now-2004.

Agrapart

Champagne Agrapart

57 avenue Jean-Jaurès

51190 Avize

France

Phone (326) 57.51.38

Fax (326) 57.05.06

<85>

Agrapart NV Brut Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

Lightly rich and creamy. Creamy mousse.

Drink now-2005.

Aimery, Sieur d'Arques

Albrecht

Lucien Albrecht

9 Grand'Rue

68500 Orschwihr

France

Phone (389) 76.95.18

Fax (389) 76.20.22

<76>

Lucien Albrecht NV Riesling, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Soft peachy Riesling fruit on a firm mousse base.

Drink upon purchase.

Antica Cantina Fratta

Via Fontana

11 - 25040 Monticelli Brusati

Italy

Phone (30) 652661

Fax (30) 652661

<80>

Antica Fratta 1995 Franciacorta Brut

Better acidity than the 1998 (75 point in the last edition), this vintage also has lots of creamy-malo - potentially creamy-biscuity, finesse.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Antica Fratta NV Franciacorta Satèn Brut

I prefer the basic brut on the nose to the floral-malo aromas here, although there is nothing actually negative about this nose, just that it does not have as much elegance. On the palate, however, the story is much different, with the extraordinary floral-fruit in this wine having all the elegance. Both will go creamy-biscuity, but this is the one that will have the finesse.

Drink now-2004.

<75>

Antica Fratta NV Franciacorta Brut

Fresh and elegant on the nose, with malo peeping through like a hint of toffee sauce on the palate.

Drink now-2004.

Aretey

Arvic Aretey

Av. Barcelona, 95

08720 Vilafranca del Penedès

Spain

Phone (93) 310 2262

Fax (93) 310 0671

<78>

Aretey 2000 Cava Brut Reserva

Rich, violeety fruity.

Drink now-2004.

<70>

Aretey NV Cava Brut

Sweet, elevated fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Argyle

Argyle Winery

691 N. Hwy 99W

Dundee

OR 97115

Phone (503) 538-8520

Fax (503) 538-2055

<87>

Argyle 1997 Brut

Another Argyle vintage with elevated fruit. Although excellent, neither the 1996 (88 points) nor this vintage are as special as the Argyle's straight 1995 Brut (90 points). If Rollin Soles persists

with this lifted style he should release the wine two years younger. Only tip-top acidity has kept this at such a high quality level.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Argyle 1996 Knudsen Vineyard Brut

The quality and class has been compromised by elevated fruit aromas. If this has any lifted aromas, they have been swamped by creamy-rich, rock-solid fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Arione

Via Luigi Bosca 135

14053 Canelli

Italy

Phone (141) 823172

Fax (141) 835172

<87>

Arione NV Asti Dolce

The intensely sweet Moscato fruit has such crisp acidity that it almost has menthol-like cooling effect (I hasten to add that there is nothing menthol or remotely minty in taste or aroma, it's a purely physical effect).

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Arione NV Piemonte Brachetto Dolce

The fruit is not as rich as some of the Brachetto d'Acqui, but has a finer point acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Arlaux

Champagne Arlaux Père & Fils

20 rue de la Vigne du Roi

51390 Vrigny

France

Phone (326) 03.60.22

Fax (326) 03.47.33

<87>

Arlaux 1990 Brut

Rich and ready. Great acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<86>

Arlaux 1995 Brut

Attractive, firm-fruited Champagne with a touch of exotic aroma, and heaps of acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Arlaux NV Brut

Fresh, fruity, creamy mousse.

Drink now-2006.

Arnould

Champagne Michel Arnould & Fils
28 rue de Mailly
51360 Verzenay
France

Phone (326) 49.40.06

Fax (326) 49.44.61

<86>

Michel Arnould NV Rosé Brut Grand Cru

The *cuvée* due to be released in September 2002 is everything you could wish for in an easy-drinking, uncomplicated, fruity rosé, with deliciously fresh strawberry Verzenay Pinot Noir on the finish.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Michel Arnould NV Brut Grand Cru

The release due out in September 2002 is much finer, fresher and fruitier than the overly oxidative current *cuvée*.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Michel Arnould NV Réserve Brut Grand Cru

The *cuvée* I tasted was a pre-release sample of the next release due in December 2002 and it obviously needs a little ageing, but has lovely Pinot Noir fruit dominating.

Drink 2004-2007.

Auche

Champagne Ch. de l'Auche
Coopérative Vinicole
51390 Janvry
France

Phone (326) 03.63.40

Fax (326) 03.66.93

<90>

Ch. de l'Auche 1996 Nectar de St Rémi, Brut

Wonderful violet fruit with sublime creamy-vanilla finish.

Drink now-2008.

Ayala

Champagne Ayala
2 Boulevard du Nord
51160 Aÿ-Champagne
France

Phone (326) 55.15.44

Fax (326) 51.09.04

<84>

Ayala 1993 Brut Millésimé

Very young for a 1993. Obviously recently disgorged.

Drink 2004-2007.

Bardoux

Champagne Bardoux
5-7 rue Saint-Vincent
51390 Villedommange
Phone (326) 49.25.35
Fax (326) 49.23.15

<?>

Bardoux NV L'An 2000 Brut

Fizzy oak-sap in a gaudy blue bottle. For colour-blind lovers of 4x2 only.
Drink upon purchase.

Barnaut

Champagne Barnaut
13 rue Pasteur
51150 Bouzy
France
Phone (326) 57.01.54
Fax (326) 57.09.97

<85>

E. Barnaut NV Rosé Authentique, Brut Grand Cru

Cherry-coloured and cherry-flavoured Pinot Noir fruit dominating.
Drink now-2005

<85>

E. Barnaut NV Cuvée Douceur, Sec Grand Cru

Very fruity, albeit somewhat elevated, with tangy pineapple notes, and a medium-sweet finish.
Drink upon purchase.

<85>

E. Barnaut NV Grande Réserve, Brut Grand Cru

The nose needs to come together, but the palate has gently rich, pineapple fruit (unusual for Bouzy), with a soft, sweet ripeness on the finish.
Drink now-2005.

<77>

E. Barnaut NV Sélection, Extra Brut Grand Cru

If this wine had more acidity, more dosage, less oxidative treatment and no malolactic, it would score 87 rather than 77.

Drink now-2006.

Baron Albert

Champagne Baron Albert
Grand Porteron
02310 Charly-sur-Marne
France
Phone (323) 82.02.65
Fax (323) 82.02.44

<85>

Cuvée Jean de la Fontaine 1996 Brut Millésime

Very fine, floral aromas, with rich fruit underneath. The fruit is not classic Champagne, although the acidity is.

Drink now-2004.

<85> **La Préférence de Baron Albert 1994 Brut Millésime** One of the better 1994s, ironically this is cleaner and better focused than other generally superior vintages of La Préférence, with a very crisp, clean finish. Drink now-2004.

<85>

Baron Albert NV Brut Rosé

Fresh, crisp and vital, with excellent acidity and a chewy-creaminess on the finish.

Drink now-2004.

Barone Pizzini

Via Brescia

25050 Timoline di Cortefranca

Italy

Phone (30) 984136

Fax (30) 9884650

Barone Pizzini

<74>

Barone Pizzini 1998 Franciacorta, Cuvée Bagnadore

A rich-flavoured cuvée that needs a lighter touch for more elegance and finesse.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Barone Pizzini 1999 Franciacorta Satèn

True Satèn *barrique*-fermented fruit supported by true Satèn-smooth mousse, all lemons and limes, with splendid acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Barone Pizzini NV Franciacorta Brut

Fresh, lemony fruit that will go toasty-lemony.

Drink now-2004.

Barossa Valley Estate

Heaslip Road

Angle Vale

SA 5117

Australia

Phone (8) 8284 7000

<75>

Barossa Valley Estate 1996 E & E Sparkling Shiraz

The deepest coloured sparkling Shiraz of the tasting, with some oxidative aromas, bags of fruit and a rich oaky finish. Definitely in the oak-driven mould.

Drink now-2005.

Baumard

Domaine des Baumard
8 rue de l'Abbaye
49190 Rochefort-sur-Loire
France

Phone (241) 78.70.03

Fax (241) 78.83.82

<80>

Baumard 2000 Brut Millésime, Crémant de Loire

Has finesse on nose, but needs 6-9 months for palate to catch up.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Baumard NV Carte Turquoise, Crémant de Loire Brut

Very fresh, slightly peppery, but quite attractive fruit. Excellent acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Baumard NV Carte Corail, Crémant de Loire Brut Rosé

Excellent aperitif style rosé from 100% Cabernet franc. Finely focused finish.

Drink now-2004.

Baur

4 rue Roger Frémeaux
68420 Voegtlinshoffen
France

Phone (389) 49.30.97

Fax (389) 49.21.37

<74>

Charles Baur NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The current 1999-based cuvée is lovely and fresh with attractive apple-blossom fruit and good, clean acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Bava

Strada Monferrato 2
14023 Cocconato
Italy

Phone (141) 907083

Fax (141) 907085

<80>

Bava NV Malvasia di Castelnuovo don Bosco, Rosé Dolce

More flavour than most Brachetto d'Acqui, but not as fresh and crisp as in the last edition (85 points).

Drink upon purchase.

Bearsted Vineyard

Caring Lane

Bearsted
Maidstone
Kent
Great Britain
Phone (1622) 736974
Fax (1622) 736974
<80>

Bearsted 1997 Brut

The pre-release sample was excellent, with lots of lovely fresh fruit. It shows what can be achieved with primarily Seyval (80%) in some English vineyards. Not my favourite grape, although it is probably my favourite amongst the French hybrids and German crosses that infest English vineyards. None of these grapes will figure prominently in the future of top class English wine, but when the quality is as obvious, only biased old fool would ignore it.
Drink upon purchase.

Beaumont des Crayères

Champagne Beaumont des Crayères
64 rue de la Liberté
Mardeuil 51318 Epernay
France
Phone (326) 55.29.40
Fax (326) 54.26.30
<85>

Beaumont des Crayères NV Grand Rosé Brut

A serious rosé with rich, creamy, yeast-complexed fruit on the finish, but will go oxidative if kept, so drink on purchase.
Drink upon purchase.
<85>

Beaumont des Crayères NV Demi-Sec Grande Réserve

Elegantly rich, vanilla-infused fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

Beck, Graham

Graham Beck Wines
Robertson 6705
South Africa
Phone (23) 626 1214
Fax (23) 626 5164
<85>

Graham Beck 1994 Pinot Noir-Chardonnay Brut, Cap Classique (*magnum*)

I cannot believe this fresh, breezy, succulently fruity wine is eight years old and hails from baking hot Robertson.
Drink now-2004.
<84>

Graham Beck 1996 Brut Blanc de Blancs, Cap Classique

Almost as classy as in the last edition, but I'm not sure if this is going to go biscuity or, perhaps, a tad malty. Drink it while it's at its best.

Drink upon purchase.

<83>

Graham Beck 1997 Brut Blanc de Blancs, Cap Classique

This new release is a touch lifted, but with very serious, creamy-rich fruit underneath. I envisage this going creamy-brazilnut-biscuity, but unless the acidity can be tweaked at dosage stage I suggest drinking within a few months of purchase.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

Graham Beck 2000 Synergy, Cap Classique

I tasted a pre-release sample of this wine, which was not due to be disgorged until May 2003 and was blown away by the concentration and potential complexity. New products are impossible to predict and I suspect my score could be grossly underrated.

Drink 2004-2006.

<80>

Graham Beck NV Chardonnay-Pinot Noir Brut, Cap Classique

The lifted fruit aromas remind me of in the last edition's Cuvée Two Thousand, as does the strawberry-Pinot fruit that dominates the palate, but the colour is pale, without any hint of the copper-tinge that marked that wine. I was going to drop this one point, but the fruit improves from one glass to the next.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Graham Beck NV Pinotage Sparkling Red, Cap Classique

High-toned and lifted makes this less exciting than the pre-release sample tasted a couple of years ago, but interesting winegum fruit with some tannic grip on the finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Becker

Jean Becker

68340 Zellenberg

France

Phone (389) 47.90.16

Fax (389) 47.99.57

<80>

Jean Becker NV Crémant d'Alsace

Can't say that Alsace does not have fruit!

Drink upon purchase.

Winzergenossenschaft Beckstein

Weinstrasse 30

97922 Lauda-Königshofen

Germany

Fax (9343) 5000

Fax (9343) 5277

<77>

Winzer-genossenschaft Beckstein 2000 Riesling Trocken

This wonderfully fresh, clean and crisp wine stood out from an ocean of miserable not-so-clean Trocken Sekte.

Drink now-2004.

Bellavista

Via Bellavista
5 - 25030 Erbusco
Italy

Phone (30) 7762000

Fax (30) 7760386

<83>

Bellavista 1997 Franciacorta, Gran Cuvée Brut

An elegant wine with fruit so fresh and clean and young.

Drink now-2004.

<82>

Bellavista NV Franciacorta, Gran Cuvée Satèn

The best-ever Bellavista Satèn I've tasted. I have recommended Bellavista Gran Cuvée Satèn before, but I have always qualified my recommendation with the observation that there is nothing about the wine that would distinguish it from others as Satèn. What is Satèn? Well, the only thing it claims to be is low-pressure, like a true *crémant*, hence 'satin' texture of the mousse. In time, if Satèn is to be a distinctive and distinctly superior wine within the DOCG, it will also possibly come to mean selected grapes that have been *barrique*-fermented, but at the moment *crémant* is the only obligation. No previous Bellavista Satèn could be described as such, but L0152 certainly is and this emphasises its finesse.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Bellavista NV Franciacorta Cuvée Brut

Apple-blossom aromas followed by rich, green-apple fruit. Will go toasty.

Drink upon purchase.

Bera

Cascina Palazzo
Azienda Agricola Cascina Palazzo
Via Castellero N 12
Neviglie 12050
Italy

Phone (173) 630194

Fax (173) 630394

<80>

Bera 2001 Cascina Palazzo Asti

Rich and tasty, if a touch elevated.

Drink upon purchase.

Berlucchi Fratelli

Via Broletto

2 - 25050 Borgonato di Cortefranca

Italy

Phone (030) 984451

Fax (030) 9828209

<75>

Fratelli Berlucchi 1995 Casa delle Colonne, Franciacorta Brut

Fratelli Berlucchi's wines are usually too rustic for my taste. The curious thing is that they all have lovely cushiony mousse. This usually adds finesse to a sparkling wine, which only makes me wonder how rustic they would be without such a smooth mousse. There's a rustic, almondy quality to the fruit in this *cuvée*, but it has good acidity, better focus and more finesse than any of the others.

Drink upon purchase.

Bersano

Piazza Dante 21

14049 Nizza Monferrato

Italy

Phone (141) 721273

Fax (141) 701706

<70>

Bersano 1998 Arturo Bersano, Riserva Brut

Attractively fruity on nose and initial palate, but could do with finer acidity on the finish. Good, smooth mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Bersano NV Asti Dolce

Rich and tasty, if a touch elevated.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Bersano NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce

Raspberry-ripple fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Besserat de Bellefon

Champagne Besserat de Bellefon

19 Avenue de Champagne

51205 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 59.51.00

Fax (326) 59.51.19

<86>

Besserat de Bellefon 1996 Brut

High acids.

Drink 2004-2007.

<86>

Besserat de Bellefon NV Cuvée des Moines Rosé

Deliciously soft Chardonnay dominating, even though just 20 per cent of the blend. This is the best example of this Champagne I have tasted since it was sold as Crémant des Moines under Pernod-Ricard ownership.
Drink 2004-2007.

Bestheim

3 rue du Gal de Gaulle
68630 Bennwihr
France

Phone (389) 49.09.29

Fax (389) 49.09.20

<82>

Bestheim 2000 Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A very good fizz with exceptional acidity, but this acidity masks the VA, which is why I do not recommend it for keeping.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Bestheim NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

This 2000-based cuvée is fresh and crisp with elegant fruit and nice, although not particularly high, acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Bethany Wines

PO Box 245

Tanunda

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8563 2086

Fax (8) 8563 0046

<78>

Bethany Wines 1998 Barossa Cuvée Chardonnay Pinot Noir Brut

Oxidative biscuity richness.

Drink now-2004.

Beyer

Maison Emile Beyer

7 place du Château

68420 Eguisheim

France

Phone (389) 41.40.45

<76>

Emile Beyer NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A good, toasty-rich 1999-based cuvée supported by excellent acidity and a firm mousse of fine bubbles.

Drink upon purchase.

Bickensohl

Wg. Bickensohl
Neunlindenstrasse 25
79235 Vogtsburg - Bickensohl
Germany

Phone (7662) 93110

Fax (7662) 931150

<72>

Winzergenossenschaft Bickensohl 1999 Spätburgunder Brut

Some talcum power Pinot.

Drink upon purchase.

Billecart-Salmon

Champagne Billecart-Salmon
40 rue Carnot
51160 Mareuil-sur-Aÿ
France

Phone (326) 52.60.22

Fax (326) 52.64.88

Not only is the quality of Billecart-Salmon one of Champagne's best-known secrets, this is one of the few houses to do the sensible thing and release the 1997s before the 1996s.

<95>

Billecart-Salmon 1990 Grande Cuvée, Brut

So fresh, it's wonderful, and the fruit has such potential complexity.

Drink now-2018.

<90>

Billecart-Salmon 1995 Blanc de Blancs

Seductively rich and succulent fruit, the typical description of Billecart-Salmon's style?

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Billecart-Salmon 1997 Cuvée Nicolas François Billecart, Brut

This might well jump several points in the future, since the oxidative character on the nose suggests that it has not been disgorged at the optimum moment, but there is no denying the quality of the rich fruit on the palate.

Drink 2004-2007.

<87>

Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Rosé

Fresh, rich and creamy, with admirable depth of fruit for such an elegant balance.

Drink now-2004.

<86>

Billecart-Salmon NV Brut Réserve

Light, fresh and fluffy, with noticeably more length of fruit than most Champagnes of this relatively light body. Beautifully focused fruit, acidity and finesse.

Drink now-2006.

Billiot

Champagne Henri BILLIOT

1 place de la Fontaine

51150 Ambonnay

France

Fax (326) 52.76.61

<86>

H. Billiot Fils 1995 Brut Grand Cru

The best of elevated fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Bimbadgen Estate

Lot 21 Mc Donalds Road

Pokolbin

NSW 2321

Australia

Phone (2) 4998 7585

Fax (2) 4998 7732

<75>

Bimbadgen Estate NV Hunter Valley Sparkling Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Herbal-infused fruit, nice acidity, with Earl Grey aromas on the finish.

Drink now-2004.

Binet

31 rue de Reims

51500 Rilly-la-Montagne

Phone (326) 88.05.00

Fax (326) 88.05.05

<89>

Binet 1995 Brut

Bagful of fruit, lovely silky-mature depth and finesse.

Drink now-2008.

Blanc Foussy

Les grandes caves Saint-Roch

65 quai de la Loire

37210 Rochecorbon

France

Phone (247) 40.40.20

Fax (247) 52.65.82

<72>

Blanc Foussy NV Touraine Brut

Lemony fizz with small bubbles. Dry with lemony-acid finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<72>

Blanc Foussy NV Demi-Sec Touraine

Not too sweet. Very tangy greengage fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Blaul

Weingut Alfred Blaul
Hofgut Goennheim
Ludwigstrasse 52
67161 Goennheim
Germany

Phone (6322) 8533

Fax (6322) 66060

<72>

Weingut Alfred Blaul, Hofgut Gönheim NV Pinot Extra Brut

Very pale apricot colour (no hint on label), soft strawberry fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Bleasdale

Bleasdale Vineyards
Wellington Road
Langhorne Creek
SA 5255
Australia

Phone (8) 8537 3001

Fax (8) 8537 3224

<78>

Bleasdale 2001 Sparkling Shiraz

Simple but pleasing creamy-jammy fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Bleasdale NV Sparkling Shiraz

Creamy-oaky with raspberry fruits. More finesse than the 2001 vintage.

Drink now-2005.

Bléger

Domaine Bléger Claude
23 Grand'Rue
67600 Orschwiller
France

Phone (388) 92.32.56

Fax (388) 82.59.95

<76>

Domaine Claude Bléger NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Crisp, fresh, pineapple fruit when first released, this wine ages very nicely for up to one year in bottle, adding a creamy richness to the mid-palate.

Drink now-2004.

Blin, H.

Champagne H. Blin
5 rue de Verdun
51700 Vincelles
France

Phone (326) 58.20.04

Fax (326) 58.29.67

<88>

H. Blin 1996 Brut

When freshly disgorged, this fresh, fluffy Champagne has an excellent concentration of fruit and shows even better than Blin's 1995, but after one year's post-disgorgement ageing it goes through an intermediate stage when it gains in complexity, yet loses finesse and needs more time to regain this (which it will).

Drink now-2008.

<85>

H. Blin NV Brut Rosé

Almost a Strawberry Cup!

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

H. Blin NV Brut Tradition

Very rich for weight. This has been a very consistent cuvée for at least five years, but it is always better on foreign markets such as the UK, where it receives extra landed-age and it is obvious that it will go creamy-biscuity. In France, however, this cuvée can be so raw and estery that is sometimes hard to imagine just how good it will turn out to be. French buyers with English tastes should keep well-cellared for at least one year.

Drink now-2006.

Blondel

Champagne Th. Blondel
Les Monts Fournois
51500 Ludes
France

Phone (326) 03.43.92

Fax (326) 03.44.10

<83>

Th. Blondel 1995 Vieux Millésime, Chardonnay, Brut Premier Cru

Malo-softened, creamy fruit. Will go biscuity.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Th. Blondel 1998 Blanc de Blancs Millésime, Brut Premier Cru

Due to be released in September 2002, this vintage has fine, crisp, clean fruit, but does not have the creaminess of the 1995.

Drink now-2005.

Blue Pyrenees Estate

Vinoca Road
Avoca

Vic. 3467

Australia

Phone (3) 5465 3202

Fax (3) 5465 3529

After almost 40 years of ownership, Blue Pyrenees was sold in late-October 2002 to John Ellis, a merchant banker, and Bill Anderson, a Sydney-based property developer and hotelier.

<80>

Blue Pyrenees 1998 Chardonnay Pinot Noir Pinot Meunier

Excellent concentration.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Blue Pyrenees 1998 Midnight Cuvée Chardonnay

Intense fruit, a touch VA-lifted, but it's tasty, so obviously works.

Drink now-2005.

Boizel

Champagne Boizel

14 rue de Bernon

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 55.21.51

Fax (326) 54.31.83

<90>

Boizel 1989 Joyau de Chardonnay, Cuvée des Auctionnaires Brut

It is two years since I have tasted this and the evolution is quite noticeable, going from 'exceptional finesse and complexity ... with a Pinot-like structure, particularly on the finish' to deeply Chardonnay with hints of *barrique*-fermented qualities that were not evident two years ago. The finesse is almost as much as before, the complexity even greater, with nuances of walnut and coconut emerging, while overall it has jumped up one percentile point in quality. Furthermore, there is every indication that the finesse, which is no means absent, will one day return even more strongly than before.

Drink now-2011

<90>

Boizel 1990 Cuvée sous Bois, Brut

Interesting: after two years of finding Cuvée Sous Bois so oxidative that I have describe it as 'Boizel meets Bollinger', it has emerged beautifully and with finesse. That's not to say there are no oxidative elements to it because there are, but they do not figure as dominant in the overall complex scheme of things.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Boizel 1991 Joyau de France, Brut

The last edition's 'early-picked fruit' has transmogrified into peachy Chardonnay, helping the score to edge up one percentile point. Nice acids on the aftertaste suggest further improvements to come, plus a completely subjective feeling that this could turn into something special.

Drink 2004-2009.

<90>

Boizel 1996 Grand Vintage, Brut Millésime

This serious quality 1996 misses out on an even higher score in the 90s for no other reason than it should have been kept on yeast for at least another year or two. This is a great Champagne that could have been greater. I optimistically look forward to a later release.

Drink now-2009.

<85>

Boizel NV Rosé Brut

As fresh as a daisy, with bags of soft-strawberry, crisp-raspberry fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<90>

Boizel NV Chardonnay Brut Blanc de Blancs

The current blend of 1992 and 1993 is wonderfully mature and mellow, with creamy-rich Chardonnay fruit, which should go creamy-biscuity with brazilnut complexity.

Drink now-2007.

<87>

Boizel NV Brut Réserve

Rich and stylish with elegant fruit and superb acidity makes for a refreshing, bracing even, aperitif style of Champagne that also works well at the table. The last edition's cuvée developed a rich biscuitiness of true complexity by the end of 2001.

Drink now-2007.

Bollinger

Champagne Bollinger

16 rue Jules Lobet

51160 Aÿ-Champagne

France

Phone (326) 54.33.66

Fax (326) 54.85.59

After 25-odd years I am beginning to wonder whether the rosé style fits the Bollinger character. Maybe Madame Lily was right? She once declared that 'Champagne is a white wine' to emphasise that Bollinger would never make a rosé. What I think would be interesting would be a Bollinger *blanc de blanc*. A Vieilles Vignes Françaises Blanc de Blancs would be awesome!

<91>

Bollinger 1990 R.D. Extra Brut

One bottle of the RD disgorged on 12 December 2001 had a mushroom aroma, the other did not. The RD version of this outstanding vintage (92 points as a Grande Année in 2000 edition) is softer and less complex to a perfectly aged Grande Année 1990.

Drink 2004-2009.

<91>

Bollinger 1992 Grande Année, Brut

Intensely flavoured, barrel-fermented Champagne of very high quality. Piercing acidity.

Drink now-2021.

<97>

Bollinger 1995 Grande Année, Brut

Everything that stood out in the instantly complex, hugely intense, fruit-infused pre-release sample in the last edition has emerged with even more class, complexity and finesse this year.

Drink now-2023.

<97>

Bollinger 1996 Grande Année, Brut

The power and majesty! Drink now-2030.

<90>

Bollinger 1995 Grande Année Rose, Brut

Bollinger must have renewed some casks in 1995 because the oakiness is almost Selosse-like in its dominance (but without any of the raw estery character). Very rich fruit with an amazingly long aftertaste. This will keep, but is best drunk as young and as fresh as possible.

Drink now-2004.

<99>

Bollinger 1996 Vieilles Vignes Françaises, Blanc de Noirs Brut

Pre-release sample. Beginnings of massive fruit. Very intense. Oak showing.

Drink 2004-2010.

<85>

Bollinger 1996 Grande Année Rosé, Brut

The oak really stands out.

Drink now-2013.

<90>

Bollinger NV Special Cuvée, Brut (*magnum*)

Magnums and bottles of Special Cuvée are always like chalk and cheese, with no surprises this year, which is very much like in previous editions, with its nose chock-a-block full of autolysis and a staggering amount of acidity shoring up the fruit on the palate.

Drink 2004-2011.

<88>

Bollinger NV Special Cuvée, Brut

Big, rich and as clean as a whistle, with a lovely concentration of pristine fruit. Those who are addicted to Special Cuvée's blatantly oxidative style of old will be disappointed, but others like me can only be impressed by the purity and intensity of this wine, which reveals its aged components discreetly as part of a slow-building complexity on the finish and aftertaste.

Drink now-2008.

Bonnaire

Champagne Bonnaire

120 rue d'Épernay

51530 Cramant

France

Phone (326) 57.50.85<90>

Bonnaire 1996 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

Stunningly rich, crisp and vivacious, with intense, zippy-zingy fruit supported by great acidity. Probably has some barrel-fermented content, although there is nothing oaky about this pristine wine at all. My only reservation is a whisper of lifted fruit, which does not affect the enjoyment value, hence the high score, but does make me cautious about its potential longevity.

Drink now-2005.

Bonnet

Champagne Alexandre Bonnet
138 rue du Général-de-Gaulle
10340 Les-Riceys
France

Phone (325) 29.30.93

Fax (325) 29.38.65

<85>

Alexandre Bonnet 1995 Blanc de Blancs, Brut

Really quite powerful creamy-crisp flavours building in the mouth.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Alexandre Bonnet NV Perle Rosée, Brut

Rich, full-flavoured rosé for the table.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Alexandre Bonnet NV Grande Réserve, Brut

Crisp and clean with assertive mousse.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

Alexandre Bonnet NV Blanc de Noirs, Brut

Very fresh, clean and correct, this survived my tastings whereas some famous Champagnes did not. However, it lacks the sort of mid-palate weight or finesse that would be needed for a higher score.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Alexandre Bonnet NV Cuvée Prestige

Light and fresh with lots of clean fruit.

Drink now-2005.

Bouillot

Domaine Louis Bouillot
Rue des Frères Montgolfier
21 700 Nuits-Saint-Georges
France

Phone (380) 62.61.08

Fax (380) 62.37.38

Part of Varichon et Clerc (Savoie).

<84>

Louis Bouillot 1998 Perle Noire, Blanc de Noirs, Brut Millésimé

This rich, ripe, tasty, very fruity sparkling wine has excellent acidity and could almost be Champagne. Bouillot is based in Nuits-St.-George and I've not been impressed by its Crémant de Bourgogne in the past, which makes this a most pleasant surprise. In fact, after scoring it so high, I put it in the middle of a Champagne *blanc de noirs* tasting and I marked it just as high. Very good, Pinot Noir and Gamay, only the presentation lets it down. The same label lower down on a non (cheaply) embossed bottle without such an ornate neck label would look so much more classy.

Drink upon purchase.

Boulard

Champagne Raymond Boulard
Route Nationale 44
F-51220 Cauroy-les-Hermonville
France

Phone (326) 61.50.54

Fax (326) 61.54.92

<85>

Raymond Boulard NV Cuvée Rosé Brut

Big and rich with a touch lifted fruit mingling with oxidative complexity, finishing up creamy. One for the table, but drink, don't keep.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Raymond Boulard NV Brut Tradition

The current release has crisp, refreshing fruit that hints of pineapples and is lifted by fine acidity. The next cuvée, due out in February 2003, is a very different kettle of fish, with oak showing on the nose and softer, fuller, richer fruit on the palate. Although not over-oaked or raw and estery, as Selosse often is, Francis has hit what I believe to be the maximum amount of oak for any of his wines. If anything, he should back-pedal a bit. If he does, then the tamed-down oak could lift the score of this wine into the 90s. As it stands, both the current release and the next cuvée (a blend 1997, 1998 and 1999 as it happens) rate an identical 85 points for quality, although markedly different in style.

Drink now-2005.

Boursault

Champagne Château de Boursault
Boursault 51480 prés Epernay

Phone (326) 58.42.21

Fax (326) 58.66.12

<86>

Château de Boursault 1994 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Exceptionally good for 1994.

Drink 2004-2005

<84>

Château de Boursault NV Brut Tradition

A relatively light style that is fresh and fruity, the Brut Tradition always benefits from 12 months extra ageing.

Drink 2004-2005

<85>

Château de Boursault NV Rosé Brut

When you taste the current cuvée you might well think "So what?", but if you cellar it for 2-3 years, it will repay dividends. It always does. The dark-coloured 1996-based Rosé Brut (Lot No. 16 10 98 11 09) has been stored in my own cellar since 1999 and is now starting to show

potential four years later, with its beautiful cherry-strawberry fruit gaining finesse with every bottle I open.

Drink 2005-2006

Bouvet

Bouvet Ladubay
1 rue de l'Abbaye
St-Hilaire-St-Florent
49400 Saumur
France

Phone (241) 83.83.83

Fax (241) 50.24.32

<89>

Bouvet Ladubay 1999 Tresor, Brut Saumur

Fresh, elegant aromas over fine, well-structured, creamy-tangy fruit. Although this is a top-top score for French fizz outside of Champagne, the 1999 vintage drops one percentile point over the 1998, due to the latter's finer acidity.

Drink now-2004.

Braun

Vignobles Camille Braun
16 Grande Rue
68500 Orschwihr
France

Phone (389) 76.95.20

<76>

Camille Braun NV Riesling, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The rich pineapple fruit in this Crémant d'Alsace helps it to stick out from the crowd, but is pineapple an expression of Riesling fruit? I think not. I think the pineapple in this 1998-based cuvée is an expression of VA-lifted fruit, but it works well enough in a fizz that's not going to be cellared.

Drink upon purchase.

Breaky Bottom Vineyard

Rodmell
Lewes
Sussex
Great Britain

Phone (1273) 476427

Fax (1273) 476427

<78>

Breaky Bottom, Millennium Cuvée Maman Mercier 1996 Cuvée Réserve Brut

Serious Seyval fizz and so young for 1996.

Drink now-2004.

<78>

Breaky Bottom 1999 Cuvée Réserve Brut

The greenness on the pre-release sample of this wine (due to be launched in September 2002) would have worried me once, but it is much less noticeable on the palate than on the nose and having seen how this characteristic was present on Peter Hall's Cuvée Maman Mercier two years ago and had disappeared within a year, I'm happy to put it down as a developmental stage. Particularly as the fruit is so lovely. Wonderfully fresh, almost luscious. The mousse is velvety-smooth.
Drink upon purchase.

Bredasole

Bredasole di Ferrari Giacomo
Via S. Pietro
42 - 25030 Paratico
Phone (35) 910407
Fax (35) 910407
<80>

Bredasole 2000 Franciacorta Satèn

The pre-release sample of this vintage showed great promise for elegance. The oak that is beginning to insinuate itself on this style is noticeable, but certainly not obtrusive.
Drink now-2004.
<77>

Bredasole NV Franciacorta Brut

Bags of fruit supported by refreshing acidity. Will go toasty.
Drink 2004-2006.
<74>

Bredasole NV Franciacorta Extra Brut

White peach and green almond fruit. Should go toasty.
Drink now-2004.

Breuer

Georg Breuer
Geisenheimerstrasse 9
65385 Rudesheim-am-Rhein
Germany
Phone (6722) 1027
Fax (6722) 4531
<80>

Weingut Georg Breuer 1994 Georg Breuer Brut

This excellent crisp blend provides a good stepping stone between Sekt and Champagne. Champagne style with German expressiveness.
Drink now-2004.
<76>

Weingut Georg Breuer 1999 Riesling Brut

Rich, nicely balanced fruit. More ripeness than most at this level.
Drink now-2005.

Brice

Champagne Brice

3 rue Yvonnet

51150 Bouzy

France

Phone (326) 52.06.60

Fax (326) 57.05.07

Jean-Paul Brice was one of the three owners of Barancourt before it was sold to Vranken. A quiet, intellectual type, Jean-Paul specialises in what was the most successful concept of Barancourt in its hey day, a range of mono-*cru* Champagnes.

<87>

Brice NV Bouzy Grand Cru Brut

Big, rich and tangy, with heaps of Pinot fruit.

Drink now-2006

Bricout

Champagne Bricout

Ancien Château d'Avize

51190 Avize

France

Phone (326) 53.30.00

Fax (326) 57.59.26

Part of the group La Financière Martin until financial problems forced its sale to the US-owned Luxembourg investment company Opson Schneider. Pierre Martin, ex-chairman and CEO of La Financière Martin, which owned Champagnes Bricout and Delbeck, was charged with fraud, fraudulent bankruptcy and breach of trust. The group's financial director, Louis Fariello and Epernay-based wine broker, Luc Lhermitte, were also charged. The new owners had discovered that over half of Bricout and Delbeck's €185 million turnover was from sales of *vins sur lattes*.

This involved speculation on a massive scale (6.2 million bottles compared to the groups annual sales of less than 2 million). When Opson-Scheider took over, it found the company had not been able to meet its payments for two months. On April 24, Bricout and Delbeck filed for bankruptcy with estimated liabilities of €100m. With rights to some 400 hectares of vineyards at stake, Bricout-Delbeck will either end up in the Vranken portfolio or be swallowed up by LVMH, which will keep the vineyard contracts and sell off the brands.

<87>

Bricout 1992 Brut Réserve

Rich, serious.

Drink now-2007.

<84>

Bricout NV Brut Réserve

Fresh, clean, easy.

Drink now-2005.

Brizé

Domaine de Brizé

49450 Martigné-Briand

France

Phone (241) 59.43.35

Fax (241) 59.66.90

<78>

Domaine de Brizé NV Brut Rosé, Saumur

Clean, crisp and gluggy with peppered strawberries for fruit. Peppered strawberries. Clean, crisp and gluggy.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Domaine de Brizé NV Saumur Brut

Delicious, fruity, very Loire, very focused, absolutely clean and tangy.

Drink upon purchase.

BRL Hardy

Reynella Winery

Reynell Road

Reynella

SA 5161

Australia

Phone (8) 8392 2222

Fax (8) 8392 2202

<76>

Leasingham Classic Clare 1994 Sparkling Shiraz

Sweet jammy richness.

Drink now-2004.

<79>

Arras 1995 Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Oak showing through and tannins on the finish, but this is the first year that I have been able to recommend this multi-medal winning vintage. Initially I did not like its maltiness and unripe acids, but although these characteristics were gradually buried beneath the effects of autolysis and post-disgorgement aromas, the wine was still foursquare and lacking in finesse right up to mid-2001. In November, however, it started to come around and by April 2002 it was as good as it is going to get. Much has to do with the base wine used for the dosage of the most recent shipments, I suspect, but it took a long time getting there and still does not warrant more than a silver medal in my estimation.

Drink now-2004.

<81>

Arras 1997 Chardonnay Pinot Noir

Within a few months the same disgorgement had gone from fresh and fluffy to toasty, but it is a big improvement over the high-profile, low-selling 1995 Arras, particularly at the same stage of its life. When this wine has been properly tuned, I would like to see it released much younger.

Drink now-2005.

<75>

Bay of Fires 1997 Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Toasty rich, bottle mature.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Kamberra Tumbarumba 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay

The fruit in this wine is finer and firmer than Kamberra Meeting Place, thus not as approachable, but Tumbarumba will be the better wine after a couple of years, even though both score equally for current drinking.

Drink now-2005.

<77>

Nottage Hill 1999 Riverland Sparkling Chardonnay Brut

Crisp-fruity aromas and fresh, crisp, sherbety fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<77>

Yarra Burn 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay Pinot Meunier

Fruit-driven, gluggy, but could work on the finesse.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Meeting Place 2000 Pinot Noir Chardonnay, Kamberra

Light and fluffy with fresh, creamy fruit, a very soft mousse, excellent acidity and a perfumed finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Banrock Station NV Sparkling Shiraz

Fresher and more fruit-driven than most, this is an easy-drinking, rich and sweet wine brimming with black fruits when first released, but after a few months it gradually develops a talcum powder quality to the fruit, especially on the finish.

Drink now-2004.

<78>

Omni NV Brut

Fruity, easy-drinking with soft, sweetish fruity finish.

Drink now-2004.

<78>

Sir James 1997 Vintage Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Fruity with a contradictory ripe-green edge.

Drink now-2005.

<76>

Sir James NV Sparkling Shiraz

Sweet red fruits, quite oaky, but very rich fruit and balanced in its own way.

Drink upon purchase.

Brown Brothers

Gorton Drive

Mystic Park

Vic. 3581

Australia

Phone (3) 5457 9233

Fax (3) 5457 9426

<77>

Brown Brothers 1996 King Valley Whitlands Pinot Chardonnay Brut

Biscuity-rich fruit with the merest malty touch.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Brown Brothers 1996 Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut, Milawa Vineyard

Very soft mousse, ultra-fine bubbles, with delicate, creamy-going-biscuity-apple fruit.

Drink now-2005.

<75>

Brown Brothers 1998 Pinot Noir Chardonnay, Milawa Vineyard

Stewed fruits.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Brown Brothers 1998 Sparkling Shiraz, Milawa Vineyard

Rich, mellow aroma, some oakiness.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Brown Brothers NV King Valley Sparkling Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Good fruit, clean, fine acidity. Should develop toasty-biscuity aromas.

Drink now-2005.

Brugnon

Champagne P. Brugnon

16 rue Carnot

51500 Rilly-la-Montagne

France

Phone (326) 03.44.89

Fax (326) 03.46.02

<86>

P. Brugnon NV Cuvée Elégance, Brut Premier Cru

So rich and nicely acidic that it almost stains the palate! Elegant new presentation.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

P. Brugnon NV Brut Premier Cru

Earlier in the year this was very freshly disgorged, but its youthful fruit had excellent construction and promised to make a very fine non-vintage within just a few months. By June it had fulfilled this promise.

Drink 2004-2007.

<85>

P. Brugnon NV Brut Rosé Premier Cru

Nice, easy-drinking, strawberry fruit.

Drink 2004-2007.

Brulez

Champagne Brulez

14 grande rue

10360 Noe-les-Mallets

France

Phone (325) 29.61.39

<88>

Louis Brison 1996 Cuvée Tendresse, Brut

No malolactic in this rich, fresh, intensely flavoured wine, with its concentrated fruit hinting of peaches and a suggestion of barrel-fermentation, although no oak is evident.

Drink now-2005.

<87>

Louis Brison 1996 Cuvée Germain Brulez, Millésime Brut (*magnum*)

Powerful autolytic aromas followed by pristine fruit underscored by fresh and almost flashy acidity. Great mousse.

Drink now-2007.

<87>

Louise Brison 1998 Millésime Brut

No malolactic in this vintage either and you can tell from its springtime fresh aromas and the deliciously crisp, clean fruit supported by lively acidity on the palate.

Drink now-2005.

Brun, Roger

Champagne Roger BRUN

1 impasse de St-Vincent

51160 Aÿ-Champagne

France

Fax (326) 54.09.40

<89>

Roger Brun NV Brut Réserve

Soft and fruity, lovely cushiony mousse.

Drink now-2006.

Brun de Neuville, Le

Champagne Le Brun de Neuville

Route de Chantemerle

Bethon 51260 Anglure

France

Phone (326) 80.48.43

Fax (326) 80.43.28

<89>

Le Brun de Neuville 1992 Millésime Brut

A biscuity-rich Champagne that is ideal for current drinking, yet has room for further development. Has complexity, fruit and finesse.

Drink now-2008.

Brun Family Estate, Le

Rapaura Road

Rapaura

Blenheim

New Zealand

Phone (3) 572 9876

Fax (3) 572 9875

<80>

Cuvée Virginie 1997 Marlborough

Intense fruit, will go toasty. Long aftertaste.

Drink now-2006.

<77>

Daniel No.1 NV Brut

The current release in mid-2002 had a lovely mousse, but the crisp fruit had a green edge (75 points), but the next release showed no greenness, although the pre-release sample I tasted was understandably estery, needing more time on yeast.

Drink 2004-2007.

Buecher

Paul Buecher

15 rue Ste Gertrude

68920 Wettolsheim

France

Phone (389) 80.64.73

Fax (389) 80.58.62

<78>

Jean-Claude Buecher NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

This 2000-based is lovely and fresh, with bags of carefully lifted fruit, supported by fine acids and a smooth mousse. Sealed with silicone-based cork.

Drink upon purchase.

Buhl

Weingut Reichsrat von Buhl

Weinstrasse 16-24

67146 Deidesheim

Germany

Phone (6326) 965019

Fax (6326) 965024

<80>

Reichsrat von Buhl 1997 Forster Pechstein Riesling Brut

Excellent richness, acidity and freshness. Some peachiness.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Weingut Reichsrat von Buhl 1998 Weissburgunder Extra Brut

Very fresh, flowery aromas; rich fruit, great acidity mid-palate.

Drink upon purchase.

Cà dei Frati

Via Frati 22

25010 Lugana di Sirmione

Italy

Phone (30) 919468

Fax (30) 919468

<73>

Cà dei Frati 1998 Cuvée dei Frati, Brut

Fat and rich. Could have been really good if it had less sulphur and more acidity.

Drink now-2004.

Ca'del Bosco

Via Case Sparse

20 - 25030 Erbusco

Italy

Phone (30) 7766111

Fax (30) 7268425

<80>

Ca'del Bosco 1995 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi

A very good Franciacorta, but not in the same class as the 1994 (85 points), although it will improve over the next few years.

Drink 2004-2007.

<78>

Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Brut

Rich, fresh, sliced-apple fruit that builds in the mouth, then quickly falls away. This should lengthen with a little bottle-age.

Drink now-2004.

<75>

Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Dosage Zéro

Malo aromas are lost, thankfully, on the palate, which is crisp, with a firm structure and focused fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Ca'del Bosco 1997 Franciacorta Satèn Brut

This vintage of Satèn is malo-influenced whereas the 1996 was fresh, crisp and sherbety in style. The latter was better in pure quality terms, but neither style is right for Satèn, which should really be a superior Franciacorta. Ca'del Bosco's Cuvée Annamaria Clementi is perfect Satèn style, but that is a special *cuvée* in its own right. Perhaps Maurizio should be trying to make a lesser version of that great wine for his Satèn?

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Ca'del Bosco NV Franciacorta Brut

Fresh, apple-blossom fruit. Needs six month's ageing to tame the mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Cadel

Champagne Guy Cadel

13 rue Jean Jaurès

51530 Mardeuil

France

Phone (326) 55.24.49

Fax (326) 54.63.15

<90>

Guy Cadel 1996 Brut

Beautiful fruit, super-silky mousse, blissful!

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Guy Cadel NV Grande Réserve Brut

Rich and tasty with good acidity. Will go biscuity.

Drink now-2005.

<84>

Guy Cadel NV Carte Blanche Brut

This has good, characterful flavour rather than any particular finesse.

Drink now-2005.

Camel Valley Vineyard

Little Denby Farm

Nanstallon

Bodmin

Cornwall

PL30 5LG

Great Britain

Phone (1208) 77959

Fax (1208) 77959

Bob Lindo was the first to mention the Christopher Merret story on the back label of an English sparkling wine. Merret was the first to record the deliberate addition of sugar to guarantee a second fermentation to create a sparkling wine, in London six years before Dom Pérignon set foot in Hautvillers and more than 40 years before the French claim the revered monk invented Champagne.

<74>

Camel Valley 2001 Cornwall Brut

Getting fatter, would prefer crisper acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Camel Valley 2000 Cornwall Brut

A tad amylic.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Camel Valley 1998 Cornwall Brut

Bob Lindo does not keep back any stocks, not even a small library for his own evaluation, so this came via a friend who served it at his daughter's wedding and had kept back a few bottles. Still very fresh and enjoyable

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Camel Valley 2001 Cornwall Pinot Noir

Very fresh, silky-soft red fruits. This rosé style can handle the soft acidity much better than the brut.

Drink upon purchase.

Can Feixas

Canaletes 08785

Cabrera d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 771 8227

Fax (93) 771 8031

<78>

Huguet 1999 Cava Reserva Brut Classic

Succulently fruity.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Huguet 1999 Cava Brut Nature

Rich flavoured, good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Can Pujol

C. del Duc de la Victoria 9

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone 893) 1535

Fax (814) 3063

<77>

Torrents Carbo 1998 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva

Same name as below, but made with traditional Cava grapes, this is clean, gentle, but it is the persistence of its fruit that raises this wine above the norm.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Torrents Carbo 1998 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva

This cuvée is 100% Chardonnay. It is fresh and zesty with creamy fruit, but not quite as good as the Brut Nature Gran Reserva made from traditional Cava grapes.

Drink upon purchase.

Canard-Duchêne

Champagne Canard-Duchêne

1 rue Edmond Canard

Ludes le Coquet

51500 Rilly-la-Montagne

France

Phone (326) 61.10.96

Fax (326) 61.13.90

<83>

Canard-Duchêne NV Brut

Neither spectacular nor bad, this is good basic pouring Champagne.
Drink now-2005.

Capetta

C.so Piave 140
S. Stefano Belbo
Italy

Phone (39) 0141 843282

Fax (39) 0141 843277

<84>

Capetta NV Asti Dolce

Fresh, rich and delicious, with a lovely mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Cardmember Wines

New Zealand Wine Society
Level 4, Quay Tower
29 Customs Street West
Auckland 1015
New Zealand

Phone (0800) 809463

Cardmember, aka the New Zealand Wine Society, is part of Beringer Blass, and Vic. Williams is the Cellar Director of the New Zealand Wine Society.

<86>

Vic. Williams Selection 1997 Marlborough

Rich, toasty, high acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Vic. Williams Selection 1998 Marlborough

Intense fruit flavour, nice structure. Should develop well.

Drink now-2006.

Carneros

Domaine Carneros
1240 Duhig Road
Napa
CA 94558
USA

Phone (707) 257 0101

Fax (707) 257 3020

<90>

Domaine Carneros by Taittinger 1995 Le Rêve, Blanc de Blancs Brut

This is as good as the 1993 and 1994 (both of which scored 90 points at their peak and were in a completely superior class to the 1992 first release), but with a few vintages under my belt, I now see this as a great sparkling wine that should not be cellared. Some of these vintages can

retain their high ratings if late-disgorged, but whenever Le Rêve is disgorged, please drink it within 12 months.

Drink upon purchase.

<?>

Domaine Carneros by Taittinger 1996 Le Rêve, Blanc de Blancs Brut

Not yet released, the pre-release sample I tasted was not as impressive as other pre-release vintages of Le Rêve and a couple of days in the refrigerator did not clarify the matter (it's not a fool-proof test). I still have this feeling though Wait and see.

<82>

Domaine Carneros by Taittinger 1997 Brut

I was not impressed by this first time around, but I detected something promising. The second bottle was exactly the same, so I re-sealed it and left it in the refrigerator for a couple of days. I like the result! This creamy-malo wine will not age long, but will go creamy-biscuity and needs one year to settle down.

Drink 2004-2006.

<83>

Domaine Carneros 1998 Brut

This is the UK landed version (i.e., no "By Taittinger" prominent on the label), which is as expected very similar, except curiously the mousse is much smoother and softer.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Domaine Carneros by Taittinger 1998 Brut

Not quite the same silkiness of mousse, but could turn out better than the Brit-landed version if kept one year.

Drink now-2004.

Casanovas

Maria Casanovas Roig

Montserrat 117

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 8910812

Fax (93) 8911572

<75>

Maria Casanovas 1999 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva

Fluffy-creaming. Good strength of fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Castel Faglia

Loc. Boschi

3 - Fraz. Calino 25046 Cazzago S.M.

Italy

Phone (59) 812411

Fax (59) 812424

<82>

Monogram 1994 Franciacorta Brut Millesimato

Distinctive lemony-oaky fruit, excellent acidity. I've tasted Satèn with harsher mousses (and this one has tiny bubbles, they're just firm rather than creamy), but if it were smoother this would make a top class Satèn indeed.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Castel Faglia NV Franciacorta Extra Brut

Fresh elegant fruit floating on a smooth mousse of tiny bubbles.

Drink upon purchase.

Castell'sches Domänenamt

Fürstlich Castell'sches Domänenamt

Schloßplatz 5

97355 Castell

Germany

Phone (9325) 60160

Fax (9325) 60188

<79>

Fürstlich Castell'sches Domänenamt NV Schloss Castell Riesling Brut

Attractive peachy Riesling aromas, showing some bottle age on nose, but very fresh on palate.

Drink now-2004.

Castellane

Champagne de Castellane

57 rue de Verdun

51204 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 51.19.19

Fax (326) 54.24.81

<85>

Vicomte de Castellane 1995 Croix Rouge Brut Millésime

A very gluggy 1995.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Vicomte de Castellane NV Chardonnay Brut

Lovely lemony-toasty fruit that is best drunk now, but can be kept a year or so for those who like toast on their toast. Fresh, crisp acidity. Really quite long and satisfying.

Drink now-2004.

<84>

Vicomte de Castellane NV Croix Rouge Brut Millésime

This did not stand out at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, although it was technically okay, but the sample submitted to my blind tasting had far more persistence of flavour and a particularly smooth mousse.

Drink now-2004.

<82>

Vicomte de Castellane NV Brut Rosé

The 2002 UK shipment was for lovers of toasty Champagnes only, while the 2003 release had no toastiness and was rich and satisfying, but not special.
Drink now-2004.

Castellino

Tenuta Castellino
Via S. Pietro
46 - 25030 Coccaglio
Italy
Phone (30) 7721015
Fax (30) 7701240
<77>

Tenuta Castellino Bonomi 1996 Franciacorta Millesimato

Toasty nose with fresh, soft, citrusy fruit on the palate. Hint of peaches mid-palate.
Drink upon purchase.
<77>

Tenuta Castellino Bonomi 1998 Franciacorta Brut

Lemony fruit quietly going toasty.
Drink upon purchase.

Cattier

Champagne Cattier
6 & 11 rue Dom Pérignon
51500 Chigny-les-Roses
France
Phone (326) 03.42.11
Fax (326) 03.43.13
<86>

Clos du Moulin NV Brut Premier Cru, Cattier

If true to form, this blend of 1990, 1993 and 1995 will get better and better, but at the moment its mellowed bouquet is far too much in advance of the sherbet-lemon fruit on the palate.
Drink 2004-2007.

Cattin

Cattin Frères
19 rue Roger Frémeaux
68420 Voegtlinshoffen
France
Phone (389) 49.30.21
Fax (389) 49.26.02
<?>

Brut Cattin NV Crémant d'Alsace

Not sure how to score this wine because I received two samples with the same label, both with additional handwritten labels, one claiming to be 100% Auxerrois, the other 100% Pinot Blanc. Whether they are sold as such, I don't know, but the Auxerrois was much the best on the nose, although it lacked fruit and acidity on the palate, whereas the Pinot Blanc was dumb, almost dull

on the nose, yet had excellent fruit and acidity on the palate. However, a 50/50 blend on the spot was second best on nose, with better balanced fruit and more finesse on the palate than either pure varietal blend. Just goes to show that the Alsace tradition of blending these two grapes is a very practical one.

Drink upon purchase.

Cavalleri

Via Provinciale
96 - 25030 Erbusco
Italy

Phone (30) 7760217

Fax (30) 7267350

<74>

Cavalleri 1998 Franciacorta Brut Satèn, Blanc de Blancs

Quite sweet with elevated fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Cavalleri 1998 Franciacorta Pas Dosé, Blanc de Blancs

The lack of dosage is compensated by rich, lifted fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Cazanove

Champagne Charles de Cazanove
1 rue des Cotelles
51204 Epernay
France

Phone (326) 59.57.40

Fax (326) 54.16.38

<90>

Charles de Cazanove 1995 Brut Azur, Premier Cru

Great malo-style richness, very creamy and although the malo is obvious - not at all off-putting, the opposite in fact.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Charles de Cazanove NV Cuvée Cazanova Brut

No, it's not a typo, this cuvée is named after the infamous Cazanova with an "a" rather than Cazanove with an "e". It was originally called Grande Réserve An 2000, which received 90 points in the 2001 edition. This wine still has the same Harlequin label, but not the silkiness of fruit or creaminess of mousse. It is a much crisper style and although not in the same class as the original Grande Réserve An 2000, which is starting to go creamy-biscuity, it is nevertheless a very nice Champagne.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Charles de Cazanove NV Brut Rosé

Very elegant fruit.

Drink now-2006.

Cazzago

Conti Bettoni Cazzago
Via Marconi
6 - 25046 Cazzago S. Martino
Italy

Phone (30) 7750875

Fax (30) 7750875

<78>

Conti Bettoni Cazzago 1994 Tetellus, Franciacorta Brut Millesimato

If you can get around the sulphur on the nose of this wine, you will be rewarded by seriously structured fruit of extraordinary freshness on the palate. Pity about the sulphur, but then it is probably responsible for keeping the fruit so fresh on the palate.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Conti Bettoni Cazzago NV Tetellus, Franciacorta Brut

Bags of fruit, but needs more acidity, which would give it more finesse.

Drink upon purchase.

Cep, El

Vins El Cep
Can Llopart de les Alzines
08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia
Spain

Phone (938) 912 352

Fax (938) 183 956

<75>

Marques de Gelida Gran Selecció 1996 Cava Brut Nature

Strong flavours.

Drink upon purchase.

Champalou

Didier Champalou
7 rue Grand Ormeau
37210 Vouvray
France

Phone (247)52 6449

Fax (247)52 6799

<82>

Champalou NV Vouvray Brut

Very elegant, lightly fruity, creamy aromas, delicate sweet fruit on finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Chandon (Argentina)

Bodegas Chandon Argentina
Ruta Prov. 15

Agrelo
Luján de Cuyo CP5509
Mendoza
Argentina
Phone (54) 261-4909900
Fax (54) 261-4909989
<73>

Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. 1999 Brut Nature Millésimé

Soft and clean with a creamy mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Chandon Argentina NV Brut

Rich, vinous fruit with crispness mid-palate and a smooth, creamy mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. NV Rosé

Rich, toasty fruit with excellent core-acidity and a soft mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<71>

Cuvée Spéciale Baron B. NV Extra Brut

Surprisingly vinous and well-structured fruit, with a soft, creamy mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Chandon (Australia)

Domaine Chandon
Green Point
Maroondah Highway
Coldstream
Vic. 3770
Australia
Phone (3) 9739 1110
Fax (3) 9739 1095
<84>

Chandon NV Brut

Nice and fresh , with good autolysis on the nose, exotic fruits and high acids on the palate. I think this is the first time I have preferred Chandon Australia's non-vintage to its straight vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Chandon 1997 Blanc de Noirs

Strawberries and cherries.

Drink upon purchase.

<81>

Green Point by Chandon 1997 Vintage Brut Rosé

This vintage has really built up toasty aromas since the last edition.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut

Excellent. Gorgeous fruit and acidity. Best yet.
Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Chandon 1999 Vintage Brut

Too fat. Would be good from elsewhere, but a step backwards from Domaine Chandon.
Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Chandon 1998 Blanc de Blancs

Deliciously fruity with a perfumed aftertaste when first disgorged this wine develops a rich, creamy-biscuity complexity.
Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Chandon 1998 Rosé

Juicy strawberry fruit. So gluggy!
Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Green Point by Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut

Oodles of fruit, very creamy and sumptuous. The most decadent fizz from Green Point so far.
Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Green Point by Chandon 1998 Vintage Brut Rosé

Nice, but nowhere as stunning as the same wine downunder.
Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Chandon NV Sparkling Pinot Noir Shiraz

Pure cherry Pinot Noir fruit with Shiraz relegated to supporting role (structure). Not too sweet.
Nice tannins.
Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Chandon 1997 Cuvée Riche

Tony Jordan poured this for me at the 2002 London Wine Trade Fair and it was the first time that I had come across a vintaged version of Cuvée Riche. It had really sumptuous creamy-Pinot-strawberry fruit, already nicely mellowed, yet with the potential to age even further.
Drink now-2008.

<88>

Chandon NV Pinot Shiraz

The 2000-based has wonderful Pinot fruit aromas and classy Shiraz structure. The best vintage by far of this sparkling red, but when is Chandon going to have the nerve to produce a 100% Pinot Noir, like the very first Australian sparkling burgundies?
Drink upon purchase.

Chandon (Brasil)

Chandon do Brasil

Av. Brazil 1814

01430-000 Jardim Europa

Sao Paulo
Brazil
Phone (11) 3062 8388
Fax (11) 3061 9756

<72>

Chandon Brasil NV Demi Sec

Amylic fresh, with clean, sweet fruit. Much preferred to the Brut and Brut Reserve, which seemed to be in danger of breaking up.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Chandon Brasil NB Passion

Brazilian Asti with cream and honeycomb on the finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Chandon (Spain)

Cavas Chandon
Mas Chandon
08798 Sant Cugat Sesgarrigues
Spain

Phone (93) 897.0505

Fax (93) 897.0459

<?>

Chandon 1997 Cava Gran Reserva Brut

Could be from anywhere. Fruit is too green.

Wait and see.

Chandon (Spain)

<72>

Chandon NV Cava Brut Nature

Well-aged less than fully ripe fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Chandon NV Cava Reserva Brut

Fluffy-fruity.

Drink upon purchase.

Chanoine

Champagne Chanoine
Avenue de Champagne
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 36.61.60

Fax (326) 36.66.62

<84>

Chanoine NV Grande Réserve Brut

This year's blend has some concentration of fruit and an indication that it will age quite well, but I would like to see more liveliness of fruit and a fluffier mousse.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Tsarine NV Rosé Brut, Chanoine

You must keep this one year in order to blow away the hint of banalising amylic aroma and reveal a serious rosé underneath. Lovely, smooth, cushiony mousse.

Drink 2004-2006.

<87>

Tsarine NV Tête de Cuvée Brut, Chanoine

Has the richness of a Tête de Cuvée, the character of a good grower Champagne and if left on yeast another year, it would have the finesse and cushiony mousse of a prestige cuvée.

Drink now-2007.

<89>

Tsarine 1995 Brut, Chanoine

A lovely richness of fruit.

Drink now-2007.

Charbaut

Champagne Guy Charbaut

12 rue du Pont

51160 Mareuil-sur-Aÿ

France

Phone (326) 52.80.59

Fax (326) 51.91.49

<89>

Guy Charbaut 1995 Memory

Memory harks back to the classic, slow-maturing Charbaut Certificate when Guy Charbaut and his late-brother René were owners of their own négociant house. This firm was taken over by Vranken, who utilised its prestigious premises on Epernay's avenue de Champagne, relegating its brand to secondary label status. I am impressed by this rich, vanilla-infused *blanc de blancs*, the only quibble being lifted fruit aromas on the finish. What intrigues me is that if Guy can achieve this quality with the 1995 vintage, when his basic *millésimé* rated only 84 points (in the 2002 edition), what will his 1996 Memory be like, when the basic version of that vintage scored 88 points?

Drink now-2009.

<88>

Guy Charbaut 1996 Brut

Rich fruit with oodles of classic 1996 acidity. Excellent potential, should go toasty.

Drink now-2009.

<82>

Guy Charbaut NV Brut

Characterful rather than elegant. Has quite a richness of fruit, but rather rustic.

Drink now-2005.

Chartogne-Taillet

Champagne Chartogne-Taillet

37-39 Grande Rue

51220 Merfy
France
Phone (326) 03.10.17
Fax (326) 03.19.15
<85>

Chartogne-Taillet NV Cuvée Sainte-Anne Brut

Classic blended Champagne (70% 1998 plus 30% reserves from 1995 and 1996), with the sweetness of ripe fruit, rather than dosage, dominating the finish.
Drink now-2006.

<85>

Chartogne-Taillet NV Cuvée Sainte-Anne, Blanc de Blancs

Although no vintage is claimed, the current cuvée is pure 1997. The creamy-herbal fruit will go biscuity. It is typical Chartogne-Taillet and very specific to Chardonnay grown northwest of Reims.

Drink now-2005.

Cloudy Bay

Jacksons Road
Blenheim
New Zealand
Phone (3) 572 8914
Fax (3) 572 8065
<78>

Pelorus NV Marlborough

Fat and creamy with a good fizz.
Drink now-2004.

Clouet

Champagne André Clouet
8 rue Gambetta
Bouzy 51150 Tours-sur-Marne
France
Phone (326) 57.00.82
Fax (326) 51.65.13
<82>

Paul Clouet NV Brut Rosé

Fresh yet bottle-aged cherry flavoured Pinot fruit, this rosé finishes well, but is let down by the aftertaste, otherwise it would easily have scored 85-plus.
Drink upon purchase.

Codorníu

Gran Via Les Corts Catalanes 644
08007 Barcelona
Spain
Phone (93) 301.4600
Fax (93) 301.7129

<80>

Anna de Codorníu NV Cava Brut

Very easy going. Fresh, light, elegant.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Rimat NV Cava Gran Brut

Rich and sherbety, smooth foamy mousse.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Rimat Chardonnay NV Cava Brut

Smooth, creamy-sherbety fruit.

Drink now-2004.

Cola

Cola Battista

Via Dosso Oriane

11 - 25030 Adro

Italy

Phone (030) 7356195

Fax (030) 7356195

<74>

Cola 1998 Franciacorta Brut

Really quite toasty.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Cola NV Franciacorta Extra Brut

Fresh, elegant, albeit somewhat lifted, fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Cola NV Franciacorta Brut

Soft, fresh fruit supported by a lovely cushiony mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Collet

Champagne Raoul Collet

14 boulevard Pasteur

51160 Aÿ-Champagne

France

Phone (326) 55.15.88

Fax (326) 54.02.40

<83>

Raoul Collet 1993 Carte d'Or Brut

Peachy fruit, but low dosage requires a little loosening up.

Drink 2004-2007.

<88>

Raoul Collet 1995 Carte d'Or Brut (*magnum*)

Like the fruity 75cl bottle, but with more autolysis, thus will ultimately gain far more finesse.
Drink now-2008.

<85>

Raoul Collet 1995 Carte d'Or Brut

Very fruity, easy drinking, excellent acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Raoul Collet NV Carte Perle, Brut 1er Cru

Big toasty aromas on the nose followed by crisp, lemony fruit. For toast-lovers only, although this has such good acidity it is elegant and not at all heavy, full or blowsy.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Raoul Collet NV Brut Rosé

Rich, tasty, firm cherry fruits, but will go oxidative, so drink, do not keep.

Drink upon purchase.

<88>

Raoul Collet NV Carte Rouge Brut Millésime (*magnum*)

I wish I could tell you the obligatory EU Lot number of the magnum I tasted, but I cannot and it was not for lack of looking! The 75cl bottle-size did not warrant recommendation, but the magnum most certainly does. It's chock-a-block full of autolytic finesse on the nose and possesses a formidable attack of fresh, crisp, vital fruit on the palate. Terrific acidity, excellent depth, great length and finish. What more do you want? As for the EU Lot number, it probably does not matter, since the champenois tend to put more magnums through their bottling lines at a time than they can sell in one year, thus you stand every chance of buying exactly the same wine within the first few months of publication at least.

Drink now-2007.

Contadi Castaldi

Fornace Biasca - Via Colzano

32 - 25030 Adro

Italy

Phone (30) 7450126

Fax (30) 7450322

<77>

Contadi Castaldi 1997 Franciacorta Satèn

Lesson learned! The touch of early-picked fruit detected in the last edition's preview sample is not present in the final commercial product. A developmental phase only. This is really quite rich and satisfying, with peaches and plums in the fruit and a true Satèn mousse. The rosé, not recommended, had absolutely no colour, although that was not the reason for its rejection.

Drink upon purchase.

Cornaletto di Lancini Luigi

Via Cornaletto

2 - 25030 Adro

Italy

Phone (30) 7450507

Fax (30) 7450552

<74>

Cornaletto 1997 Franciacorta Rosé Brut

Soft raspberry-cherry fruit supported by a smooth mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

COVIDES

CV del Penedès Sociedad Cooperativa Catalana

Ram Nostra Senyora 45

08720 Vilafranca del Penedès

Spain

Phone (93) 817.2552

Fax (93) 817.1798

<76>

Duc de Foix 1999 Cava Brut Nature

Rich, lemony fruit with a touch of furniture polish (in the nicest of senses!)

Drink now-2004.

Cranswick Estate

Walla Avenue

Griffith

NSW 2680

Australia

Phone (2) 6962 4133

Fax (2) 6962 2888

<75>

Aldridge Estate NV Sparkling Brut

Very fresh, fruity and easy-drinking with a good, medium firm mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Crawford

Kim Crawford Wines

Dominion Road

Auckland

New Zealand

Phone (9) 630 6263

Fax (9) 630 6293

<88>

Kim Crawford Rory 1996 Brut

Delicious fruit. Sumptuous. Lengthy.

Drink now-2005.

Cray

Chapelle de Cray

37400 Lussault-sur-Loire

France

This property belongs to English wine shipper Paul Boutinot.

<76>

Chapelle de Cray 1998 Brut Vintage, Montlouis

Fresh and more fruity than previous vintages with honeyed-sweetness on finish.

Drink now-2004.

Curbastro

Ricci Curbastro

Via Adro

37 - 25031 Capriolo

Italy

Phone (30) 736094

Fax (30) 7460558

<80>

Ricci Curbastro 1998 Franciacorta Extra Brut

Oak a bit dominant, but a lovely mousse that's quite firm and lively, yet smooth with tiny bubbles. I'd like to see freshness and finesse pushed ahead of the oak.

Drink upon purchase.

<84>

Ricci Curbastro 1999 Franciacorta Satèn Brut

This was submitted as 1999, but has not been vintaged before. Definitely 1999, whether the bottle indicates a vintage or not. Rich *barrique* aromas integrating with the fruit. The mousse is not as firm as in the last edition, but not as smooth as the year before. If this were packaged differently (i.e., more understated and classy), the perception would be equally different.

Drink now-2005.

Currabridge

An own label belonging to UK shipper Siegel Wine Agencies.

<76>

Currabridge NV Brut

Very fresh and frothy with rich, yummy fruit and a soft mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Currabridge NV Rosé Brut

Just as fruity as the Brut, but slightly drier and more perfumed.

Drink upon purchase.

D'Arenberg Wines

PO Box 195

McLaren Vale

SA 5171

Australia

Phone (8) 8323 8206

Fax (8) 8323 8423

<80>

The Peppermint Paddock NV Red Chambourcin

Crisp, lean, yet very rich fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

Dampierre

Champagne Comte Audoin de Dampierre
5 Grande Rue
51140 Chenay
France

Phone (326) 03.11.13

Fax (326) 03.18.05

<90>

Comte Audoin de Dampierre 1990 Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

A deliciously fresh and elegant 1990 that shows class.

Drink now-2008.

<88>

Comte Audoin de Dampierre 1995 Grand Cru

Bags of fruit, not sure about the finesse.

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Comte A. de Dampierre 1996 Brut Grand Cru

Tight with high acids. Needs at least one year's additional post-disgorgement ageing.

Drink 2004-2009.

<83>

Comte Audoin de Dampierre NV Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru

Rich and tasty with a slightly green, early-picked character, which will go toasty given 12 months more bottle-age.

Drink now-2004.

Danebury

Danebury House
Nether Wallop
Stockbridge
Hants

SO20 6JX

Great Britain

Phone (1264) 781851

Fax (1264) 782212

<75>

Danebury 1998 Cossack, Brut

Fresh, crisp, aperitif style with refreshing acidity. Much preferred to the more expensive 1996 Cossack, which I reserved opinion over in the last edition and did not survive this year's tastings.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Danebury 1999 Cossack, Brut

This vintage is not due to be commercialised until March 2004 or thereabouts, which is a mistake, since this wine is perfectly ready to drink now. It will not gain anything from further yeast contact. Indeed, it will not be half the wine it is now.

Drink upon purchase.

Davenport

Limney Farm

Castle Hill

Rotherfield

East Sussex

TN6 3RR

Great Britain

Phone (1892) 852 380

Fax (1892) 852 381

<87>

Limney Brut 1999 Davenport

This year's re-release sample has edged up one point over in the last edition's pre-release sample. It's also gained a name, Limney Brut, as opposed to Davenport Reserve Brut as presented in the last edition. It should not be too long after this edition is published before this inaugural vintage of Limney Brut is launched. At the time of writing, this wine was due to be released in November 2002 and after my second preview tasting I think that is about right, but it should be very interesting to see how it ages. Absolute stonking acidity provides the steel for highly focused, precision fruit riding gently on a wonderfully smooth, cushiony mousse.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Limney Brut 2000 Davenport

If I had not tasted the 1999 I would have been as excited about the 2000, rather than almost as excited. I do not know whether it is the vintage or the difference in cépage (this is 50/50 Pinot Noir/Auxerrois as opposed to the 1999, which is 73/27 Pinot Noir/Auxerrois), but does not quite have the intensity that the inaugural vintage had at the same age. There's still a long way to go, but I think that this will be easier-drinking, more fresh and fruity style, but that will only make it even more friends.

Drink 2004-2007.

Deakin Estate

PO Box 1333

South Melbourne

Vic. 3205

Australia

Phone (3) 9682 5000

Fax (3) 9682 5200

Part of the Wingara Wine Group.

<72>

Deakin Estate NV Brut

Tasty, rich, firm mousse, creamy fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Deidesheim

Winzerverein Deidesheim
Prinz-Rupprecht-Strasse 8
67146 Deidesheim
Germany

Phone (6326) 968842

Winzerverein Deidesheim 1999 Pfalz Trocken

Rich Pinot fruit, creamy fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

Delamotte

Champagne Delamotte
7 rue de la Brèche d'Oger
51190 Le Mesnil-sur-Oger
France

Phone (326) 57.51.65

Fax (326) 57.79.29

<89>

Delamotte 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Excellent, with very fine fruit.
Drink now-2006

<?>

Delamotte 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

A preponderance of acetaldehyde dominated this wine at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting and it was much too mature at my blind tasting, but the bottle submitted to WINE Magazine's showed lovely biscuity-mature fruit. Quite a bit of bottle variation then, but probably safe to say this is one of the more early-maturing 1995s and, possibly, it is particularly sensitive to storage conditions, hence the variation.

Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Delamotte NV Brut

Plenty of fruit with a fine sherbety edge of Chardonnay currently dominating.
Drink now-2006.

Delbeck

Champagne Delbeck
39 rue du Général Sarrail
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 77.58.00

Fax (326) 77.58.01

See Bricout for the fraud story.

<86>

Delbeck NV Brut Héritage

Rich fruit, very fresh, with a lean edge. Excellent.

Drink now-2006.

Delouvin Nowack

Champagne Delouvin-Nowack
29 rue Principale
51700 Vandières
France

Phone (326) 58.02.70

Fax (326) 57.10.11

<86>

Delouvin Nowack 1996 Brut Extra Selection

The fruit is elevated, particularly on the nose, but it is impressive nonetheless, particularly on the palate. Intense, high acids.

Drink now-2005.

Déthune

Champagne Paul Déthune
2 rue du Moulin
51150 Ambonnay
France

Phone (326) 57.01.88

Fax (326) 57.09.31

I take my hat off to Paul Déthune for releasing something as fascinating, educational and quality-driven as its Trilogy initiative.

<85>

Paul Déthune NV Brut Rosé, Grand Cru

Not a longterm prospect, but keep this six months and you will be handsomely rewarded by deepening strawberry fruit on no little complexity and finesse.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Paul Déthune NV Blanc de Noirs, Grand Cru Brut

Rich, lifted fruit with a creamy-strawberry hint, good underlying acidity and a firm mousse.

Drink now-2004.

<88>

Princesse des Thunes NV Ambonnay Grand Cru

The cuvée shipped in 2003 was wonderfully rich, certainly a different class to the one shipped in 2002, and probably the best Princesse des Thunes I have ever tasted.

Drink now-2008.

<88>

Paul Déthune 1998 Brut Ambonnay Grand Cru

Excellent richness, beautifully focused Pinot Noir fruit.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Paul Déthune 1996 Brut Ambonnay Grand Cru, Trilogy Cuvée

Three bottles sold in one handsome wooden box: Cuvées 1, 2 & 3. Your mission, should you decide to undertake it, is to identify the composition of each cuvée. Answers are on a roll, so I

won't spoil your fun. All three are excellent, but my favourite, regardless of composition, is Cuvée No.2.
Drink now-2010.

Deutz

Champagne Deutz
16 rue Jeanson
51160 Ay-Champagne
France

Phone (326) 56.94.13

Fax (326) 58.76.13

<89>

Deutz NV Brut Classic

A beautiful quality of seductively rich, creamy-biscuity fruit. Different winemakers and different philosophies, yet this particular cuvée has distinctly edged towards the style of the parent company Roederer. Excellent anyway!

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Amour de Deutz 1997 Blanc de Blancs Brut

So fresh, crisp and zesty with lime-peel aromas. Extraordinary finesse for the year. The mousse with get creamier with time in bottle.

Drink now-2007.

<91>

Amour de Deutz 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Deliciously fresh fruit supported by super-silky mousse of creamy bubbles. Great finesse.

Drink now-2009.

<90>

Cuvée William Deutz 1995 Brut

Biscuity heaven!

Drink now-2008.

<89>

Deutz 1995 Brut

Although I was not impressed with this at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, it received a well-earned 89 points in the last edition for its exquisitely rich fruit and slow-building biscuity complexity and this was almost word for word my note at WIN magazine's Champagne tasting and my own blind tastings. Different disgorgements, perhaps?

Drink now-2007.

<88>

Deutz 1996 Brut Rosé

Biscuity aromas followed by biscuity fruit with a touch of youthful pepperiness, supported by great acidity and a long, long finish.

Drink now-2007.

<92>

Deutz 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Brut

This has developed beautifully between 2002 and 2033. One year ago the fruit was nice and biscuity on the nose and starting to go biscuity on the palate. Now it has creamy-walnut

complexity and finesse, which makes it different to and better than the very good toasty-vanilla 1995 (85 points).
Drink now-2005.

Devaux

Champagne Veuve A. Devaux
Domaine de Villeneuve
10110 Bar-sur-Seine
France

Phone (25) 38.30.65

Fax (25) 29.73.21

Climbing back up to form after a few lean years.

<90>

Veuve A. Devaux 1996 Cuvée Millésimée, Brut

So smooth and complete. Violet-vanilla fruit.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Veuve A. Devaux 1996 D de Devaux

Explosive mousse; fresh, tropical fruits touch exotic. Clear and precise. Several months later the mousse had calmed down and the exotic character had straightened into a more conventional, but no less exciting, rich Champagne character with excellent acids.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Veuve A. Devaux NV Cuvée D Brut

Excellent richness and acidity. Good medium term keeper. Should go toasty.

Drink now-2007.

<85>

Veuve A. Devaux NV Blanc de Noirs Brut

The creamy-rich Pinot fruit in this 1996-based cuvée is showing beautifully.

Drink now-2007.

Dezzani

Via P. Giachino 140
14023 Cocconato d'Asti
Italy

Phone (141) 907044

<80>

Dezzani NV Brachetto d'Acqui Dolce

Very fresh, excellent acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Dopff & Irion

1 cour du Château
68340 Riquewihr
France

Phone (389) 47.92.51

Fax (389) 47.98.90

<77>

Dopff & Irion NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Lovely balance of fresh fruit and crisp, clean acidity brings out the finesse in this wine.

Drink upon purchase.

Dopff Au Moulin

68340 Riquewihr

France

Phone (389) 49.09.69

Fax (389) 47.83.61

<75>

Dopff Au Moulin 1998 Chardonnay, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A good wine that could be great in Alsace fizz terms had the grapes been picked riper, the malolactic been prevented and, if only it were legal, the acidity adjusted upwards.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Dopff Au Moulin 1999 Cuvée Bartholdi, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Gently rich, creamy fruit supported by a backbone of fine acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Dopff Au Moulin NV Cuvée Pierre Dopff, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

I tasted the 2000-based Cuvée Pierre Dopff (100% 2000 in fact) and it has much richer fruit than either of the 2000-based Cuvée Julien cuvées, but not the finesse, although it is not lacking in that department.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Dopff Au Moulin NV Cuvée Julien, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Dopff Au Moulin's best-selling Cuvée Julien is currently adorned with a separate label proclaiming 'Cuvée du Centenaire 1901-2001'. This is somewhat misleading, since consumers might reasonably surmise that this is a special one-off blend when in fact three versions were submitted: [1] 25% 1999 + 75% 2000, which had the strongest fruit with stone-fruits and the barest hint of vanilla on the finish (73 points); [2] 100% 2000 with 14 months on yeast, which had beautiful fruit and by far the most finesse, plus the barest hint of the barest hint of vanilla on the aftertaste (78 points); and [3] 100% 2000 with only 9 months on yeast, which was similar to the second wine and already very drinkable, but not quite the finesse (76 points).

Drink now-2004.

Doquet-Jeanmaire

Champagne Doquet-Jeanmaire

44 Chemin Moulin Cense Bizet

51130 Vertus

France

Phone (326) 52.16.50

Fax (326) 59.36.71

<87>

Doquet-Jeanmaire 1985 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru

The freshness of such rich, clean, sweet-ripe fruit is remarkable after 17 years.
Drink now-2005.

<87>

Doquet-Jeanmaire 1990 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru

Rich and succulent.
Drink now-2005.

<83>

Doquet-Jeanmaire 1986 Coeur de Terroir, Blanc de Blancs, Brut 1er Cru

Part of a vertical tasting of 6 vintages, which you can purchase a bottle of each for 121 Euros. This would be great value and represent an amazing vinous privilege, except for the fact that four of the vintages were undrinkable (the 1990, 1989 Coeur de Terroir, 1985 Coeur de Terroir and 1979 all had mercaptan problems, which I suspect have developed in all bottles of these wines over the years, but there were no back-up samples, so I was unable to confirm this). The fact that a lesser vintage like the 1986 could still be good whereas younger, greater vintages were not is bizarre, just as is the fact that one of this wine's most attractive aspects is its lifted fruit because the very nature of lifted fruit shortens potential longevity!

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Doquet-Jeanmaire NV Rosé, Brut Premier Cru

Rich, creamy and already quite complex, but drink now before it goes oxidative.
Drink upon purchase.

Drappier

Champagne Drappier
Rue des Vignes
10200 Urville
France

Phone (25) 27.40.15

Fax (25) 27.41.19

Well worth a visit, Drappier has moved from the Grande rue and is now housed in a tastefully renovated former school.

<83>

Drappier 1999 Millésime Exception

Rich, but frankly too fat and liable to develop rather rapidly, this was, however, the best 1999 I had tasted at the time of writing. Smart packaging.

Drink now-2007.

<91>

Drappier 1992 Carte d'Or Brut (*magnum*)

Courtesy of extended lees contact and the magnum effect, this vintage has outperformed itself, with bags of autolysis on the nose and huge yeast-complexed fruit on palate.

Drink now-2007.

<92>

Drappier 1995 Grande Sendrée, Brut

This has shot up three percentile points over in the last edition's rating, which is no mean feat around the 90-point mark, but the most recent disgorgement is just so chock-a-block full of

autolytic aromas, with such beautifully focused fruit on the palate a nice edge to the acidity and a luscious creaminess building up on the finish that even a child could predict this is heading for a sumptuous peak of creamy-biscuity fruit of outstanding complexity and finesse. This single vineyard Champagne has, for a couple of years, had its disgorgement date printed down the curving right side of the label.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Drappier 1995 Cuvée Signature, Blanc de Blancs Brut

This was okay, but did not really stand out at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting or *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting, but was gorgeously creamy-rich at Drappier in Urville just one month later, super-smooth at my blind tastings in 2002, and beautifully soft and sweet, vanilla-spiced fruit in France one year later.

Drink now-2005.

<91>

Drappier 1996 Grande Sendrée Rosé Brut

Currently showing a lovely Chardonnay creaminess, but the Pinot will soon kick-in for an even more complex, creamy-biscuity richness.

Drink now-2007.

<94>

Drappier 1996 Grande Sendrée

A Champagne of exceptional elegance; very floral, fine fruit. What structure! What acidity!

Drink now-2009.

<80>

André et Michel Drappier NV Brut Nature, Pinot Noir Zero Dosage

The last edition's cuvée was a blend of 1997 & 1998 (90 points), whereas this year's is a blend of 1998 & 1999 disgorged in March 2002, which should make it somewhat more forward and theoretically not quite as good, but one plus one seldom makes two in Champagne. True the quality is nothing like in the last edition's cuvée, but there are some quite prominent estery notes, which indicate that it should not have been disgorged for 9-12 months.

Drink now-2004.

<88>

Drappier NV Carte d'Or Brut

Bags of turbo-charged fruit that will quickly go deliciously biscuity, the evolution of this cuvée is one of the most predictable, due to Drappier's low-sulphur regime. The current cuvée (87 points) and the next (88) also happen to be two of the best releases in memory.

Drink now-2005.

Duchessa Lia

Corso Piave 140

12056 S. Stefano Belbo

Italy

Phone (141) 843006

Fax (141) 843929

<85>

Duchessa Lia NV Brachetto d'Acqui, Spumante Dolce

Lovely, fresh and flavoursome fruit. Impressive acidity underlying the sweetness.

Drink upon purchase.

Duloquet

Domaine Hervé Duloquet
Mousseaux
49700 Les Verchers-sur-Layon
France

Phone (241) 59.17.62

Fax (241) 59.37.53

<73>

Domaine Hervé Duloquet NV Saumur Brut

Frothy greengage fruit. Very clean, with tangy acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Dumangin

Champagne J. Dumangin Fils
3 rue de Rilly
51500 Chigny-les-Roses
France

Phone (326) 03.46.34

Fax (326) 03.45.61

<84>

J. Dumangin Fils 1995 Brut Millésimé, Premier Cru

This rich, smooth and tangy Champagne is excellent, but the tactile impression of what seems like tannin on the finish robs this vintage of some finesse. I thought it performed much better at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting.

Drink now-2005.

<83>

J. Dumangin Fils 1997 Carte d'Or, Brut Premier Cru

The pre-release sample was a touch oxidative. Hopefully this will not show on the commercial disgorgement because the fruit is rich and fine, with excellent acidity and promises to go biscuity.

Drink now-2004.

<84>

J. Dumangin Fils NV Rosé Brut, Premier Cru

Light, fresh, raspberry fruit.

Drink now-2004.

Dumont

Champagne Daniel Dumont
11 rue Gambetta
51500 Rilly-la-Montagne
France

Phone (326) 03.40.67

Fax (326) 03.44.82

<83>

Daniel Dumont NV Grande Réserve, Brut Premier Cru

Fresh fruit salad fruit with correct structure, but lacks that something extra to take it into the 85-point bracket.

Drink now-2005.

Dutertre

Domaine Dutertre

2021 rue d'Enfer

Place du Tertre

37530 Limeray

France

Phone (247) 30.10.69

Fax (247) 30.06.92

<78>

Domaine Dutertre 2000 Cuvée Vendanges, Crémant de Loire Brut

Very dry and winery, which might not sound too attractive, but has a certain charm and promises to age well for limited period.

Drink now-2006.

<77>

Domaine Dutertre NV Brut Rosé, Crémant de Loire

Fresh, light and elegantly fruity strawberry-pink colour.

Drink upon purchase.

Duval-Leroy

Champagne Fleur de Champagne

69 avenue de Bammental

F-51130 Vertus

France

Phone (326) 52.10.75

Fax (326) 57.54.01

Duval-Leroy has never in the premier league, but it is heading that way. It has always been a good value producer, but the consistency of quality and style throughout the 1990s has exceeded that of most so-called grandes marques, and this has been thanks to Hervé Jestin, Duval-Leroy's quietly spoken, highly talented winemaker. Couple this with Carol Duval's focus on the primary brand to the detriment of the firm's BOB business (once its staple) and it is easy to appreciate just how close Duval-Leroy was to premier league promotion at the turn of the millennium. I just hope Champagne's Iron Maiden realizes just how special Jestin is. If I were put in charge of one of half-a-dozen famous Champagne houses, the very first thing I would do would be to try and tempt Jestin away.

<90>

Duval-Leroy 1990 Blanc de Blancs Chardonnay, Brut

I cannot believe I am giving such a high score to a Champagne that tastes of coconut, but it is so succulent and sexy. The creamy-coconutty richness in this wine is not the immediate effect American oak, but a characteristic found in the very best Champagnes after many years of slow evolution.

Drink 2004-2010.

<90>

Duval-Leroy 1992 Fleur de Champagne, Millésimé Brut

Tangy fruit, still has a way to go, needs more post-disgorgement aromas.

Drink 2004-2010.

<90>

Duval-Leroy 1995 Fleur de Champagne, Extra Brut

Exquisitely fine, fresh and fluffy when first disgorged, this takes on a gentle, creamy character after a couple of months. It has a softer, better integrated mousse than the 1996 Extra Brut with atypically easy fruit for a low dosage wine. Vanilla on finish, potentially very complex.

Drink 2008-2013.

<90>

Femme de Champagne 1995 Brut Millésime

Not due to be launched until the end of 2002, the pre-release sample I tasted was wonderfully fresh on the nose with tight, intense fruit on the palate. The aromas promise to go toasty. Please do not go oxidative on me, as all the disgorgements except the first of the 1990 did. This cuvée more than most requires precision disgorgement dates.

Drink now-2008.

<87>

Duval-Leroy 1996 Blanc de Chardonnay Brut

Due to be released in September 2002, a preview sample tasted at Decanter's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting in April was fresh and fruity (85 points), but its easy-drinking mode for an early 1996 raised an eyebrow or two. However, this was exactly the same score as an even earlier preview sample had notched up in the previous edition, when its 'relatively forward' characteristics were duly noted. Tasted blind, but with more time for reflection at my own blind tastings, this wine crept up two points and although still forward in a rich, creamy style, with peachy aromas and quite fat for a 1996, it has developed more depth and intensity, which has stretched its drinking window by a few years.

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Duval-Leroy 1996 Brut Vintage

This had bags of fruit, extract and acidity at the Decanter 1995/1996 Champagne tasting, when I would have given it 88 points, but creamy-caramel malo aromas were more prominent by the time of my blind tastings in June.

Drink now-2006.

<86>

Duval-Leroy 1998 Blanc de Blancs [en Futs] Brut

Sweet-ripe fruit. Not sure how the label will describe this wine, which was vinified entirely in oak, although it is not at all oaky.

Drink now-2006.

<87>

Duval-Leroy 1998 Blanc de Blancs [Biody, en Futs] Brut

Again, not sure how the label will describe this wine. Virtually the same wine, but from vines that have been farmed biodynamically. Also vinified entirely in oak, and also not oaky.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Duval-Leroy NV Brut

A smoother mousse than this year's Premier Cru Fleur de Champagne, but simpler, fatter fruit, with less acidity and thus seemingly sweeter.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne, Brut Premier Cru

Fine, crisp fruit on a firm mousse of persistent bubbles.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne, Rosé de Saignée Brut

Rich and full with toasty complexity lifted by freshness and a light balance.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Duval-Leroy NV Fleur de Champagne Brut Non Vintage

Fresh and gentle, the fruit in this cuvée was softer than normal at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting in March, but back to its usual crisp self under the new livery in May and June, when the only softness to be found was in its immaculate creamy mousse. First witness of the anglicised "Non Vintage" on a Duval Leroy label and, I dare say, the same as one of its other pre-new-label cuvées, but I shall have to report on it separately until the new names and labels settle down.

Drink now-2006.

<87>

Duval-Leroy NV "Paris" Brut

A richly flavoured, elegantly balanced Champagne, the intensity of which builds up on the finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Eberbach

Hessische Staatsweingüter Kloster Eberbach

Schwalbacherstrasse 56-62

65343 Eltville

Germany

Phone (6123) 92300

Fax (6123) 923090

<76>

Hessische Staatsweingüter Kloster Eberbach 1999 Erbacher Marcobrunn Riesling Brut

Classic, clean, fresh Riesling Sekt.

Drink upon purchase.

Eblin Fuchs

Joseph et Christian Eblin-Fuchs

75 Route du Vin

68340 Zellenberg

Phone (389) 47.91.14

Fax (389) 49.05.12

<77>

Eblin Fuchs NV Blanc de Noirs, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

I tasted the 1999-based blend of this elegantly presented cuvée and enjoyed the richness, ripeness and acidity of its fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<?>

Eblin Fuchs NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The 2000-based blend of this cuvée is very estery, indicating that a further 9 months or so on yeast would have been preferable (although I have tasted other 2000-base Crémant d'Alsace that are already very drinkable), but the fruit shows rich potential. This could go malo-dominated and/or oxidative, so the jury's still out, but it would be interesting to cellar for six months or nine at the most.

Wait and see.

Ellner

Champagne Charles Ellner

1 & 6 rue Côte Legris

51207 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 55.60.25

Fax (326) 51.54.00

<85>

Charles Ellner 1995 Millésime Brut

Biscuity fruit, high acids.

Drink now-2006.

Engel Fernand

Rorschwihr 68590

France

Phone (389) 73.77.27

Fax (389) 73.63.70

<76>

Engel Fernand 1999 Chardonnay, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A tad more yellow, richer and sweeter than Engel's straight Brut non-vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Engel Fernand NV Tradition, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

This is drier than Engel's Chardonnay cuvée, but good fruit nonetheless, with a fresh, crisp finish and capable of ageing.

Drink now-2004.

English Wine Plc

Tenterden Vineyard

Small Hythe

Tenterden

Kent TN30 7NG

Phone (1580) 763033

Fax (1580) 765333

<75>

Chapel Down 1995 Epoch Vintage Brut

Only on mid-to-end palate can you experience the vigour and expressiveness this wine once had. Come on guys, when are you going to sell off in bulk three or four vintages of this *cuvée* so that you can proudly release it at its best?

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Chapel Down 1999 Pinot Réserve

I might have under-scored this 70/30 Pinot Noir/Pinot Blanc blend, as it is very good, not due to be released until 2003 and unlike the Epoch vintage Brut, it could well benefit from extra time on yeast. That said, it's already motoring well, with beautifully piquant fruit, superb acidity and a flavour that builds in the mouth.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Chapel Down NV Epoch Brut Rosé

This is so much better than the old, tired, pure-1995 vintage version of this pure Pinot Noir rosé I have been tasting for much too long. The reason no doubt being that it is a 1999-base blend and has terrific acidity, with sherbety sharpness to pep up the finish. Should develop cherry fruit flavours over the next 12 months.

Drink now-2004.

<74>

Chapel Down NV Epoch Brut

This wine is really far more impressive on the palate and finish than its score of 74 points might suggest. I just wish that they would lift the aromas to make it equally appealing on the nose. I'm not suggesting anything as base as VA-lifted, just old fashioned blending of some more aromatic material. Excellent acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Epinay

Domaine du Clos de l'Epinay

L'Epinay 37210 Vouvray

France

Phone (247) 52.61.90

Fax (247) 52.71.31

<77>

Domaine du Clos de l'Epinay NV Vouvray Brut

Full-throttle greengage Chenin with soft, fluffy mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Domaine du Clos de l'Epinay NV Tête de Cuvée, Vouvray Brut

Estery nose, would have benefited from 6-9 months more on yeast, but excellent depth of fruit and acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Ferghettina

Ferghettina di Roberto Gatti

Via Case Sparse 4
25030 Erbusco
Italy
Phone (30) 7760120
Fax (30) 7768098
<76>

Ferghettina 1995 Franciacorta Extra Brut

Rich, peach blossom fruit, quite full on the finish.
Drink upon purchase.

Ferret

Mateu Jose
Avda. Penedès 27.bo.la Rapita
08730 Santa Margarida I Els Monjos
Spain
Phone (93) 898.0105
Fax (93) 898.0584
<78>

Ferret Reserva Antiga 1998 Cava Brut Nature Reserva

Coconutty oaky!
Drink upon purchase.
<78>

Ferret NV Cava Brut

Fresh, zesty, clean as a whistle, breezy fruit. Hideous, naff bottle.
Drink upon purchase.

Feuillatte

Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte
CV de Chouilly
Chouilly 51206 Epernay
France
Phone (326) 54.50.60
Fax (326) 55.33.04

Hopefully the great promise shown in the vintages of 1995 and 1996 are not just a flash in the pan, but I cannot confirm one way or the other because Nicolas Feuillatte still operates like a third-rate cooperative when setting up tasting for wine writers visiting their premises.
<92>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1985 Palmes d'Or Brut

Unfortunately no longer available, not even in my own cellar! This was obviously a great Champagne from the moment it was released and is still extraordinarily fresh (disgorged four years). Very light in colour. Amazing.
Drink now-2008.
<89>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Palmes d'Or Brut

With such remarkably pure fruit and great finesse, this is easily the best Palmes d'Or since the inaugural 1985 vintage.

Drink now-2009.

<79>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1992 Brut Premier Cru

Heavy on complexity, light on fruit, lacks finesse.

Drink now-2005.

<89>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Brut Premier Cru

[Off-trade version] Delicious fruit, has finesse, smooth mousse.

Drink now-2005.

<87>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Brut Millésimé

[On-trade version] Coconutty-creamy-biscuity rich, highlighted by truly striking acidity for the vintage.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Cuvée Spécial

Very fresh, floral-biscuity aromas with great acidity preceding biscuity-rich fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2006.

<89>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Cramant

Excellent concentration, brilliant acidity, very silky fruit. This exciting Champagne has climbed three percentile points in the in the last edition.

Drink now-2005.

<87>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Chouilly

The fluffiest mousse of all four mono-cru Champagnes. This also has most expressive citrus aromas.

Drink now-2005.

<89>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Mesnil

Most complex, very rich and satisfying, most evolved, yet still has room for development.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1995 Verzy

Very satisfying, but not as expressive as it was in the last edition. However, all four mono-cru Champagnes have performed so differently (but never poorly) on so many occasions over the last two years that it is impossible to say how any of them will develop. This could be the best of the lot again next year.

Drink now-2005.

<84>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1996 Blanc de Blancs Millésime, Brut Premier Cru

Sherbety, with lots of zing.

Drink upon purchase.

<88>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1996 Palmes d'Or Rosé Brut

Good job I reserved judgement in the last edition because although this does not have 1996's trademark acidity, and is evolving rapidly for that vintage, it is rather special with mature Burgundy notes. One to explore at the table.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Nicolas Feuillatte 1997 Rosé Brut

This is nice, but not special, with good light richness of fruit. If I was disappointed following Nicolas Feuillatte's groundbreaking 1995s and 1996s, I should remember that this is a relatively modest vintage and I have never recommended this cuvée before, even in a great vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

Fleury

Champagne Fleury

43 Grande rue

10250 Courteron

France

Phone (325) 38.20.28

Fax (325) 38.24.65

Not just organic, but biodynamic.

<90>

Fleury 1996 Brut

Classic barrique-fermented Champagne. Mind-blowing barrage of aromas and flavours. Rich vanilla fruit and a sprinkling of cocoa, yet still classy.

Drink now-2009.

<86>

Fleury NV Fleur de l'Europe Brut

Rich, fresh and sizzingly crisp.

Drink now-2009.

<85>

Robert Fleury 1902-1998 NV Brut

Strikingly fresh and crisp fruit, with a pithy hint of tannin on the finish.

Drink now-2009.

Fluteau

Champagne G. Fluteau

5 Rue de la Nation

10250 Gyé-sur-Seine

France

Phone (325) 38.20.02

Fax (325) 38.24.84

<88>

G. Fluteau 1995 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

This vintage has developed a Bolly-like biscuity-rich complexity.

Drink upon purchase.

<89>

G. Fluteau 1995 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut (*magnum*)

Much fruitier in magnum, with slower evolving biscuity-richness and no Bolly-like character.
Drink now-2006.

<87>

G. Fluteau 1996 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

Fruitiness is really opening out. Although I preferred this when it was at its 'turbo-charged fruit' stage two years ago (89 points) there is still plenty of excellent fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<87>

G. Fluteau 1997 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

The last edition's 'precocious 1997' has developed rich, complex, vanilla fruit, but still has plenty of zippy-zingy acidity to maintain freshness and vitality.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

G. Fluteau 1998 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

Due to be released in September 2002, this vintage was not together in at Fluteau itself in April 2001 (when it would have scored 80 points), but had shaped up by June, when I tasted the same disgorgement in my blind tastings. It does not, however, have the depth and quality of the 1997 (87 points).

Drink now-2005.

<86>

G. Fluteau NV Brut Carte Blanche

The latest cuvée had tangy fruit in April, but not quite the liveliness of previous cuvées. Like all of Fluteau's Champagnes, however, this is a very youthful wine and April was the earliest I had attempted to taste it. It was not due to be released until June 2002 and re-tasting then it had come together nicely, showing a lovely freshness on the nose and light, easy, creamy-richness of fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2004.

<86>

G. Fluteau NV Cuvée Réservee Brut

Fresh, zesty aromas followed by intense, sherbety fruit.

Drink now-2006.

Fonné

Michel Fonné

24 rue du Général de Gaulle

68630 Bennwihr

France

Phone (389) 47.92.69

Fax (389) 49.04.86

<75>

Barth René 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut, Michel Fonné

This was submitted as a 1999 vintage, yet there was no mention of any vintage on label. Fresh, crisp, apple-blossom fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Fontanafredda

Via Alba 15
12050 Serralunga d'Alba
Italy

Phone (173) 613161

Fax (173) 613451

<88>

Fontanafredda 2001 Asti Millesimato

Intense Moscato fruit, beautifully balanced sweetness and the smoothest, creamiest of mousses.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Fontanafredda 2001 Acqui, Brachetto d'Acqui

Raspberry-ripple fizz.

Drink upon purchase.

Forget-Brimont

Champagne Forget-Brimont

11 route de Louvois

51500 Craon de Ludes

France

Phone (326) 61.10.45

Fax (326) 61.11.58

<?>

Forget-Brimont 1995 Cuvée Prestige, Cuvée de l'An 2000, Brut 1er Cru

Sauternes-like richness, followed by bitterness, should not have been disgorged for 3-4 years.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Forget-Brimont NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru

Very rich and tasty, but lacks acidity and thus keeping power. Nevertheless, this is a good rosé, with enough depth to be useful at the table and yet a nice ripe sweetness on the finish for drinking on its own.

Drink upon purchase.

<84>

Forget-Brimont NV Brut Premier Cru

Sweet, tasty, deeply flavoured fruit that is rewarding, but has more character than finesse.

Drink now-2004.

Forget-Chemin

Champagne Forget-Chemin

15 rue Victor Hugo

51500 Ludes

Phone (326) 61.12.17

Fax (326) 61.14.51

<85>

Forget-Chemin NV Carte Blanche Brut

Sweet, ripe, deep and satisfying fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<84>

Forget-Chemin NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru

Rich, sweet and tasty with traces of malo and lifted fruit.

Drink now-2005.

Freixenet

Pza Joan Sala 2

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 891.7000

Fax (93) 818.3095

<85>

Freixenet Trépat 1998 Cava Brut

Excellent fruit, crisp acidity, length. The best Blanc de Noirs Cava ever made.

Drink now-2004.

<82>

Freixenet NV Rosado

Rich and fruity with good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Freudenreich

Joseph Freudenreich

3 Cour Unterlinden

68420 Eguisheim

France

Phone (389) 41 3687

Fax (389) 41 6712

<80>

Joseph Freudenreich NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The 1999-based cuvée has very fresh aromas, excellent fruit and acidity mid-palate, trailing off to a vanilla-infused finish.

Drink now-2005.

Friedrich-Kern

Weingut Franz Friedrich-Kern

Hauptstrasse 98

54470 Bernkastel-Wehlen

Germany

Phone (6531) 3156

Fax (6531) 7706

<74>

Weingut Franz Friedrich-Kern 1999 Cuvée Katharina Riesling Brut

Some peachiness and more structure than most, although not a longterm proposition.

Drink upon purchase.

Fries

Weingut Markus Fries
Zum Brauneberg 16
54484 Maring-Noviand
Germany

Phone (6535) 493

Fax (6535) 1505

<72>

Weingut Fries 1998 Noviander Klosterberg Riesling Halbtrocken

Clean, fresh; good weight of fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Gaioncelli

Barboglio de Gaioncelli
Via N. Sauro
25040 Colombaro di Cortefranca
Italy

Phone (30) 9826831

Fax (30) 9826831

<75>

Barboglio DeGaioncelli NV Franciacorta Extra Dry

You can smell the Extra Dry dosage on this wine in the form of toasted candyfloss sugar, but the acidity is there and should make succulent drinking if given another year in bottle.

Drink 2004-2006.

Galinière

Domaine de la Galinière
37210 Vernou
France

Phone (247) 52.15.92

<82>

Domaine de la Galinière 1998 Cuvée Clément, Vouvray Brut

Honeyed-rich fruit, excellent acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Gallais, Le

Manoir de Boursault
Boursault 51480 près Epernay

Phone (326) 58.42.21

Fax (326) 58.66.12

The cousin of Château de Boursault's Harald Fringhian farms a small part of the estate and has struck out on his own.

<84>

Le Gallais NV Brut Cuvée du Manoir

This rich-flavoured Champagne was the best of the first batch of Le Gallais cuvées I tasted.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Le Gallais NV Rosé Cuvée du Manoir

Deep colour, deep flavour, hinting of strawberries.
Drink upon purchase.

Gardet

Champagne Gardet
13 rue Georges Legros
51500 Chigny-les-Roses
France

Phone (326) 03.42.03

Fax (326) 03.43.95

<86>

Cuvée Charles Gardet 1996 Brut

Although raw and estery at Decanter magazine's 1995/1996 tasting, that was obviously an anomaly, as it has been fresh and crisp, with creamy fruit at my blind tasting and on several other occasions throughout the year.

Drink now-2006.

<86>

Georges Gardet NV Brut Spécial

Gone are days of Gardet's rather rustic, distinctly oxidative non-vintage style. This is very, very fresh, but not at all unready, with crisp, clean, well-focused fruit driving the style and, consequently, far more finesse than ever.

Drink now-2005.

Garrett

Andrew Garrett Vineyard Estates
PO Box 532
McLaren Vale
SA 5171
Australia

Phone (8) 8323 8853

Fax (8) 8323 8550

<76>

Andrew Garrett 1998 Sparkling Shiraz

Nice floral fruit on nose, although VA lift is noticeable after a while.

Drink upon purchase.

Gatinois

Champagne Gatinois
7 rue Marcel Mailly
51160 Aÿ
France

Phone (326) 55.14.26

Fax (326) 52.75.99

<87>

Gatinois 1997 Grand Cru

Copper-tinged; great sun-blessed richness with fine, lean structure.

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Gatinois NV Grand Cru

Copper-colour tinged; clean, fruity, nicely concentrated, youthful. Excellent.

Drink now-2005.

Geil

Weingut Oekonomierat Johann Geil I. Erben

Kuhpfortenstrasse 11

67595 Bechtheim bei Worms

Germany

Fax (06242) 1546

Fax (0624) 2693

<78>

Weingut Oekonomierat Johann Geil I. Erben 1999 Bechtheimer Hasensprung

Weissburgunder Brut

Has an excellent richness and extract balanced by high acids.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Geil's Sekt und Weingut 1999 Schwarzriesling Brut Rosé

Fresh, easy going rosé with some real pink in the colour and good length in the fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Geiler

Jean Geiler

Cave Vinicole d'Ingersheim

45 rue de la République

68040 Ingersheim

France

Phone (389) 27.05.96

Fax (389) 27.51.24

<79>

Jean Geiler NV Blanc de Blancs, Crémant d'Alsace Brut Prestige

Fresh and rich, with excellent acidity and the finest mousse in the entire range.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Jean Geiler NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Attractively lifted fruit on the nose and mid-palate.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Jean Geiler Médaille d'Or Paris 2000 NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The Médaille d'Or version of Jean Geiler Brut cuvée has higher acidity, the greater depth and length. Otherwise it is quite similar, as indeed all blends of the same cuvée should be.

Drink upon purchase.

Geoffroy

Champagne René Geoffroy
150 rue du Bois-des-Jots
Cumières 51480 Damery
France

Phone (326) 55.32.31

Fax (326) 54.66.50

<86>

René Geoffroy 1996 Cuvée Sélectionnée

Too sweet now, but will mellow out.

Drink 2005-2009.

<86>

René Geoffroy NV Cuvée Prestige, Brut Premier Cru

Big acidity, great depth of yeast-complexed fruit and an excellent mousse. Will develop more finesse.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

René Geoffroy NV Cuvée de Réserve, Brut Premier Cru

Very fresh and breezy fruit with a fine mousse of the tiniest bubbles.

Drink now-2005.

Gibson's

Gibson's BarossaVale Wines
P.O. Box 83
Light Pass
Nuriootpa
SA 5355
Australia

Phone (8) 8562 3193

Fax (8) 8562 4490

<75>

Gibson's NV Sparkling Merlot

Cherry-fruit driven with dry tannins and not too sweet finish.

Drink now-2004.

Giesen

Giesen Wine Estate
Burnham School Road
Burnham PO Box
11066 Christchurch
New Zealand

Phone (3) 347 6729

Fax (3) 347 6450

<75>

Voyage Special Cuvée Brut NV Giesen

Fruity, easy-drinking, with green apple fruit on finish.

Drink now-2004.

Gimonnet

Champagne Pierre Gimonnet & Fils

1 rue de la République

51530 Cuis

France

Phone (326) 59.78.70

Fax (326) 59.79.84

<91>

Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Brut, Millésime de Collection (*magnum*)

Incredible intensity of flavour and chock-a-block full of finesse, but could have scored 95 points with a fractionally higher dosage.

Drink 2005-2010.

<88>

Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Fleuron, Blanc de Blancs, Brut 1er Cru

The fruit in this vintage was so fresh and breezy in the last edition, but an extra 12 months has given it a much richer, longer dimension, yet just as crisp and elegant.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Pierre Gimonnet 1995 Cuvée Oenophile, Blanc de Blancs - Extra-Brut

Although pure in aroma and fruit on the palate, this cuvée has no dosage and will not keep. It dries out on the finish, although the intensity of flavour keeps it going. With a small dosage this could be a much greater wine.

Drink upon purchase.

<88>

Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Premier Cru Chardonnay, Brut

Another Gimonnet wine in the 'Club de Viticulteurs Champenois' bottle, this 1996 was nearly finished at the time of tasting and the future 1997 vintage was soon due to be released, but whereas the latter will benefit from a year in bottle, this older vintage needs another two!

Drink 2005-2010.

<90>

Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Vieilles Vignes de Chardonnay (*magnum*)

This is so strict that it walks all over your palate in six-inch high heeled boots.

Drink 2006-2016.

<87>

Pierre Gimonnet 1996 Fleuron, Blanc de Blancs, Brut 1er Cru

Probably under scored, this has fine, rich fruit on the palate, with a nicely focused finished, but there is an estery element on the nose that needs a little time to tame down. Satisfying aftertaste. Excellent acidity.

Drink 2004-2009.

<89>

Pierre Gimonnet 1997 Premier Cru-Chardonnay, Brut

Presented in the plump, embossed 'Club de Viticulteurs Champenois' bottle, this is already nicely developed on the palate, which is rich and creamy-biscuity, but needs time for the nose to mellow. True brut dryness. Really tip-top for the vintage.

Drink 2004-2006.

<84>

Pierre Gimonnet 1998 Gastronome, Blanc de Blancs, Brut 1er Cru

Although closer to Gastronome's lean-structured, intense, zippy fruit style than the rather rich and fat 1997 (86 points), it does not have the quality of that vintage, let alone the 1996 (88) or the stunning 1995 (90). However, it does reflect the intrinsic difference in quality of the 1998 vintage, thus this cuvée is true to both the year and Gimonnet.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Pierre Gimonnet NV Cuis Premier Cru

Fresh, zesty, expressive fruit. Excellent finesse.

Drink now-2006.

Giraud

71 bd. Charles de Gaulle

51160 Aÿ-Champagne

France

Phone (326) 55.18.55

Fax (326) 55.33.49

<90>

Henri Giraud 1993 Grand Cru Fût de Chêne Brut

Sealed with an *agrafe*, this true *tête de cuvée* is produced in tiny quantities and has been *barrique*-fermented, but is not at all over-oaked, although the oak is indeed easily noticed. Exquisite fruit, sweet and ripe, will go biscuity with much finesse. Lovely, cushiony mousse. Drink now-2006.

Glaetzer

34 Barossa Valley Way

Tanunda

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8563 0288

Fax (8) 8563 0218

<90>

Glaetzer NV Sparkling Shiraz

Powerful Shiraz fruit with attractive cedary oak, not at all heavy and not as sweet as some.

Drink upon purchase.

Gloria Ferrer

23555 Highway 121

Sonoma

CA 95476

USA

Phone (707) 996 7256

Fax (707) 996 0378

<80>

Gloria Ferrer NV Blanc de Noirs

Presumably 1999-based from the three-digit Lot number ending 99 on the back label, this is the best GF Blanc de Noirs I've tasted. Very fresh looking copper-tinged colour with even fresher crisp-fruit aromas and lovely, long, rich, crisp fruit on the palate.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Gloria Ferrer NV Brut

Fresh, fruity, entry level.

Drink upon purchase.

Gobillard

Champagne J.M. Gobillard

38 rue de l'Eglise

51160 Hautvillers

Phone (326) 51.00.24

Fax (326) 51.00.18

<84>

J.M. Gobillard NV Tradition

Richer and sweeter than the Grand Réserve.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

J.M. Gobillard NV Grande Réserve

Very fresh and clean, with a light balance and a touch of green on the finish.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

J.M. Gobillard 1999 Cuvée Prestige

Very rich, with very good acidity for the year, but lacks finesse.

Drink now-2005.

Goerg

Champagne Paul Goerg

4 Place du Mont Chenil

51130 Vertus

France

Phone (326) 52.15.31

Fax (326) 52.23.96

<84>

Paul Goerg NV Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru

Creamy fruit, clean and rich on the palate, with a firm backbone and a hint of undeveloped extract on the finish.

Drink now-2004.

Golan Heights Winery

PO Box 183

12900 Katzrin

Israel

Phone (972) 4 696 8420

Fax (972) 4 696 2220

<70>

Yarden 1996 Blanc de Blancs

A past release and past its best, but just scrapes in.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Yarden 1997 Blanc de Blancs

Current release Soft, rich and biscuity, this vintage is at its best and should not be kept.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Yarden 1998 Blanc de Blancs

The Blanc de Blancs is generally creamier than the Brut Galilee blend of both classic varieties.

Neither are potentially longlived, but this ages slightly slower. Theoretically that makes it

superior, but hedonistically I prefer the non-vintage in its year of release. This is a pre-release sample of the forthcoming vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Yarden NV Brut Galilee

This Pinot Noir/Chardonnay blend is absolutely clean with tightly focused fruit and the current

1998-based blend has nice high acids. It quickly mellows on the nose and assumes a biscuity

character after just one year's post-disgorgement ageing and by the second year it is tiring. The

next release (1999-based) is much softer with floral notes and likely to tire even quicker.

Drink now-2004.

Gonet

Champagne Philippe Gonet

1 rue de la Brèche d'Oger

51190 Le-Mesnil-sur-Oger

France

Phone (326) 57.51.07

Fax (326) 57.51.03

<85>

Michel Gonet 1996 Prestige 2000 Blanc de Blancs Brut Grand Cru

Very rich, lovely acidity, will go biscuity. Potentially complex.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Philippe Gonet 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru

Has plenty of extract and acidity.

Drink 2005-2008.

<85>

Philippe Gonet 1998 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru

The lightly rich and creamy fruit is excellent considering the vintage, but it needs time for the nose to catch up and fall in step with the palate.

Drink 2004-2006.

Gosset

Champagne Gosset
69 rue Jules Blondeau
51160 Ay-Champagne
France

Phone (326) 55.14.18

Fax (326) 51.55.88

<93>

Gosset Celebris 1998 Rosé Brut

Gosset has produced the best 1998 Champagne so far with this rosé version of its elite Celebris cuvée. It has such finesse, complexity and great acidity that it even beats Cristal Rosé 1995 by one percentile point!

Drink now-2023.

<95>

Gosset Celebris 1995 Brut

Impressively intense fruit. Great acidity. Capable of drinking now, but Gosset aficionados will give this vintage at least three years cellarage before tackling seriously.

Drink now-2023.

<92>

Gosset 1996 Grand Millésime Brut

This initially started off all stone-fruits and acid, then went extraordinarily fruity for Gosset and indeed for the 1996 vintage, but has since taken on considerable gravitas and now boasts a super-smooth, violet-vanilla dimension to the fruit. Already drinkable despite its huge acidity, but all Gosset aficionados will give this vintage plenty of cellarage. One of my three top scoring wines at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting.

Drink now-2021.

<89>

Gosset NV Grande Réserve Brut

Sulphured for the future, it is the palate, not the nose, where this year's release shows its true colours. Big structure, wonderful fruit and long-lasting acidity.

Drink 2004-2010.

<88>

Gosset NV Grande Rosé Brut

The 2002 UK shipment needed more time on yeast, but by 2003 it was deliciously fresh, fruity and ready to drink.

Drink now-2007.

Göttelmann

Weingut Göttelmann
55424 Münster Sarmsheim
Rheinstrasse 77
Germany

Phone (6721) 43775

Fax (6721) 42605

<76>

Weingut Göttelmann 1999 Münsterer Kapellenberg Riesling Trocken

Much sweeter than the Weissherbst, but just as tasty.
Drink upon purchase.

Goulet

Champagne George Goulet
65-67 avenue de Champagne
51200 Epernay
France

Phone (326) 57.41.88

Fax (326) 70.63.99

Part of Group J.L. Malard.

<83>

George Goulet NV Brut Grande Cuvée

Formerly sold as Tête de Cuvée, this Champagne showed a lovely core of pure Pinot fruit, with a long and tasty finish at the London Wine & Spirit Trade Fair (86 points), but malolactic was much more dominant under blind conditions.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

George Goulet NV Blanc de Blancs Grande Cuvée

Fresh citrusy fruit that is a touch lifted and will go toasty, but would have benefited from another year on yeast.

Drink upon purchase.

<?>

George Goulet NV Rosé Grande Cuvée

At the London Wine & Spirit Trade Fair in London, this was discreet in both colour and aroma, but full of bright Pinot fruit on the palate, and would have scored 86 points. However, both bottles submitted to my tasting had mercaptan aromas and a nasty metallic aftertaste. It was like two totally different wines or, at the very least, the latter had undergone a radically different storage.

Wait and see.

Goutorbe

Champagne Henri Goutorbe
9 rue Jeanson
51160 Ay-Champagne
France

Phone (326) 55.21.70

Fax (326) 54.85.11

<84>

Goutorbe NV Cuvée Prestige, Brut Premier Cru

Hint of lifted fruit to the central core of Pinot-dominated flavour in this Champagne.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Henri Goutorbe NV Cuvée Tradition, Brut

Clean, focused, fruit, plums and white peach.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Henri Goutorbe NV Brut Rosé

In 2002, this had firm strawberry fruit, in 2003 it was fresh and easy.
Drink now-2006.

Gramona

Industria 36
08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia
Spain

Phone (93) 8910113

Fax (93) 8183284

<75>

Gramona, III Lustrós 1997 Cava Brut Nature

Biscuity-rich with an oxidative touch.
Drink upon purchase.

Grant Burge

PO Box 421

Tanunda

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8563 3700

Fax (8) 8563 2807

<78>

Grant Burge NV Barossa Valley Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut

Tasted twice, this was creamy-rich with a fat finish in the UK, but just a few months earlier in Australia it was biscuity, with lemon finish, and not quite as impressive.
Drink now-2004.

Gratien

Champagne Alfred Gratien

30 rue Maurice Cerveaux

51201 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 54.38.20

Fax (41) 51.03.55

One of Champagne's most traditional and consistently high quality producers, Alfred Gratien became part of the Henkell Trocken group when its parent company, Gratien & Meyer, was taken over by the gigantic Sekt manufacturer in 2002.

<86>

Alfred Gratien 1992 Brut

Almost excruciating acidity, but great concentration for the year.
Drink 2005-2009.

<88>

Alfred Gratien NV Brut

Delicious richness of fruit concentration. Great potential.

Drink now-2007.

<88>

Alfred Gratien NV Cuvée Paradis

Velvety-textured fruit supported by plenty of ripe acidity.

Drink now-2007.

Gratien & Meyer

Route de Montsoreau

49401 Saumur

France

Phone (241) 83.13.30

Fax (241) 83.13.49

Now part of Henkell Trocken (see Champagne Alfred Gratien above).

<72>

Gratien & Meyer NV Saumur Brut

Greengage aroma; crisp, clean, tangy.

Drink upon purchase.

Gratien & Meyer

<70>

Gratien & Meyer NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Tasty, entry level. Clean and fruity.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Gratien & Meyer NV Cuvée Flamme, Saumur Brut

Fresh, fine aroma; creamy-rich and elegant fruit. Maybe a touch on the sweet side, but beautifully focused. Superb cushiony mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<79>

Gratien & Meyer NV Brut Rosé, Saumur

Fresh and fruity; lovely pale peach colour; fresh, clean, soft fruit. Superb cushiony mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Greffe

Christian Greffe

Rue Neuve

37210 Vernou sur-Brenne

France

Fax (247) 52.12.24

Fax (247) 52.12.24

<79>

C. Greffe NV Tête de Cuvée, Vouvray Brut

Clean, fresh, rich and tasty.

Drink upon purchase.

Grenelle

Caves de Grenelle

20 rue Marceau
49415 Saumur
France

Phone (241) 50.17.63

Fax (241) 50.83.65

<74>

Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Louis de Grenelle, Saumur Brut

Greengage all the way. For ardent lovers of Chenin Blanc.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Fine and creamy. Well focused.

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Rosé Sec, Saumur

Strawberry-raspberry; strawberry-pink colour.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Caves Louis de Grenelle NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Vin Mousseux

Real red winey fizz with tannins. Deep colour, not as sweet as some.

Drink upon purchase.

Grimau

Cellers Grimau

C. Nord 8

08720 Vilafranca del Penedès

Phone (93) 818 1372

Fax (93) 892 0812

<70>

Grimau Reserva Familiar NV Cava Brut Nature

Big on foam. Creamy pears.

Drink upon purchase.

Gruet, G.

Rue de Chemin Neuf

Bethon 51260 Anglure

France

Fax (326) 80.44.57

<84>

G. Gruet et Fils 1998 Gilbert Gruet Grand Réserve

No early-picked greenness, good clean, well-focused fruit.

Drink 2004-2006.

Gruet, G.

<81>

G. Gruet et Fils 1998 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Millésimé

Good richness of fruit for the vintage on the palate, but an early-picked greenness on the finish. The latter will turn toasty.
Drink 2004-2006.

Gruet (USA)

Gruet Winery
8400 Pan American Freeway N.E.
Albuquerque
NM 87113
USA

Phone (505) 821 0055

Fax (505) 857 0066

<80>

Gruet 1997 Blanc de Blancs

Fresh, rich, citrusy fruit. Long, with clean citrusy finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Gruet 1998 Grande Réserve

Not to be released until the end of 2002, this vintage has extremely lemony, high-acid fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Gruet NV Demi-Sec

Excellent Demi-Sec. Fresh, crisp, lively. Not too sweet at all. Clinically clean and focused.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Gruet NV Brut Blanc de Noirs

Fresher, cleaner and crisper than Gruet's non-vintage brut.

Drink upon purchase.

Gruss

Domaine Gruss
25 Grand'Rue
68420 Eguisheim
France

Phone (389) 41.28.78

Fax (389) 41.76.66

<79>

Joseph Gruss NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The 1999-based blend has super acidity underlying clean, crisp, racy fruit. Lovely aperitif wine.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Joseph Gruss NV Brut Prestige, Crémant d'Alsace

The 1998-based blend of this cuvée is more lifted and less exciting than Gruss's cheaper, basic non-vintage Brut, yet still better than most Crémant d'Alsace.

Drink upon purchase.

Hanging Rock Winery

The Jim
Jim Road
Newham
Vic. 3442
Australia

Phone (3) 5427 0542

Fax (3) 5427 0310

<74>

Macedon NV Cuvée 6

Big and toasty.
Drink now-2004.

<?>

Macedon NV Cuvée 7

Firm fruit, better acidity, but cabbagey mercaptans showing on nose.
Wait and see.

<75>

Macedon NV Cuvée 8

Tightest fruit of the three, but a bit tinny on the aftertaste.
Drink now-2004.

Heidsieck, Charles

Champagne Charles Heidsieck
4 Blvd. Henry Vasnier
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 84.43.50

Fax (326) 84.43.99

<88>

Charles Heidsieck 1990 Blanc des Millénaires, Brut

This is the latest of only three vintages to be released under this label. Unlike the 1983, which took several years of post-disgorgement ageing to attain its lovely, creamy-biscuity mellowness, and the 1985, which took equally long before it went very toasty, the 1990 shipped in 2002 already had big toasty aromas. An excellent Champagne with plenty of ripe fruit mid-palate, but I thought it should have been released a couple of years earlier. Until, that is, I tasted the current 2003 shipment in France, which was rich and creamy, but had not yet reached its third phase of development.

Drink now-2006.

<91>

Charles Heidsieck NV Brut Réserve, Mis en Cave en 1997

Lovely vanilla-infused yeast-complexed fruit marked by richness and intensity.
Drink now-2007.

<91>

Charles Heidsieck NV Brut Réserve, Mis en Cave en 1996

Such is the consistency of Brut Réserve Mis en Cave that I also described this Mis en Cave as lovely vanilla-infused, yeast-complexed fruit, but the 1996 (i.e., 1995-based) is marked by softer, smoother texture although almost as rich as the 1997 (i.e., 1996-based).
Drink now-2006.

Heidsieck Monopole

Champagne Heidsieck & Co Monopole

17 avenue de Champagne

51205 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 59.50.50

Fax (326) 51.87.07

<89>

Heidsieck Monopole 1995 Diamant Bleu, Brut

The fluffy complexity noted at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting was evident at my own blind tasting, but only after the glass had warmed up. Do not over-chill!
Drink now-2008.

<?>

Heidsieck Monopole 1996 Gold Top Brut

This also did nothing for me at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but was excellent at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 tasting, where the fruit was already very toasty and mellow. It showed even better at *WINE* magazine's Champagne tasting, where it was obviously more recently disgorged and very fruity. I had hoped to qualify these good but contrasting reviews with the notes from my blind tasting, but the sample submitted was corked and none of the Vranken wines had back-ups.

Wait and see.

<89>

Heidsieck Monopole NV Diamant Blanc, Brut

This is new to me. It's in the same uniquely-shaped bottle as the once famous Diamant Bleu, but the glass is clear, the wine pure Chardonnay rather than a classic blend and non-vintage as opposed to vintage. It is extremely rich, with creamy-lemony fruit that is just starting to develop a peachy-citrus complexity. It is also surprisingly good for a brand that the old Mumm regime had run into the ground and Vranken had, well development.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Heidsieck Monopole NV Premiers Crus Brut

M. Vranken is not above stealing other people's ideas and this one came straight off Moët's shelf. Furthermore, the lovely fruit and soft mousse here make an infinitely superior product than Moët's current non-vintage Premier Cru Brut.

Drink now-2005.

<83>

Heidsieck Monopole NV Blue Top Brut

This did nothing for me at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but it was very fresh, fruity and welcome at my blind tasting in June.

Drink now-2005.

P&C Heidsieck

51 Boulevard Henri Vasnier
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 84.41.94

Fax (326) 84.43.49

Rémy-Cointreau's umbrella company controlling its Champagne interests, primarily Piper-Heidsieck and Charles Heidsieck, but also Heidsieck, Heidsieck Heritage and Ferdinand Bonnet.
<84>

Heidsieck Héritage NV Brut

Unbelievably toasty!

Drink now-2004.

<82>

Ferdinand Bonnet NV Brut Héritage

Light, soft, easy-going style with a sweetish brut finish that should not offend anyone.

Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Ferdinand Bonnet 1996 Brut

Promises to go very toasty very quickly, but has the acidity to support it, plus excellent Pinot perfume to add complexity and finesse.

Drink now-2008.

Henriet-Bazin

Champagne D. Henriet-Bazin
9 rue Dom Pérignon
51380 Villers-Marmery
France

Phone (326) 97.96.81

Fax (326) 97.97.30

<?>

M.N. Henriet 1995 Cuvée Prestige, Blanc de Blancs Brut

Mix of young and fairly mature aromas. Probably in a developmental stage.

Wait and see.

Henriot

Champagne Henriot
3 Place des Droits de l'Homme
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 89.53.00

Fax (326) 89.53.10

<88>

Henriot 1988 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs, Brut

Absolutely stunning finesse of fruit and mouse, but the nose is so far in advance of the palate.

Drink now-2007.

<90>

Henriot 1989 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs, Brut

This is toasty heaven for those who like to drink Champagne with a full English breakfast inside every bottle.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

Henriot 1996 Brut Millésime

One sample smelly, the other fine - very fine in fact.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Henriot 1995 Brut Millésime

Glorious! Wonderfully rich and smooth, sublime mousse, great finesse, complexity and finesse, what more do you want?

Drink now-2008.

<86>

Henriot NV Blanc de Blancs Brut

This cuvée tasted sour at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, and the sample submitted to my own tasting in 2002 was creamy-malo with a firm finish, but the release tasted at the 2003 Annual Champagne Tasting was rich, flavoursome and tasty.

Drink now-2004.

Highfield Estate

Brookby Road

RD 2

Blenheim

New Zealand

Phone (3) 572 8592

Fax (3) 572 9257

<74>

Elstree 1997 Brut

High-toned, but not as malty as previous vintage.

Drink now-2004.

Hollick Wines

Coonawarra

SA 5263

Australia

Phone (8) 8737 2318

Fax (8) 8737 2952

<73>

Hollick 1998 Sparkling Merlot

Light menthol fruit with a firm mousse. Would have benefited from riper grapes.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Hollick 1999 Sparkling Merlot

Menthol Merlot fruit. Dry, lengthy and not too sweet.

Drink now-2005.

Hostomme

Champagne M. Hostomme
5 rue de l'Allée
51530 Chouilly
France

Phone (326) 55.40.79

Fax (326) 55.08.55

<?>

Hostomme 1996 Brut

Another wine that should not have been disgorged for at least two years.
Drink upon purchase.

Humbrecht

J. Bernard Humbrecht
10 Place de la Mairie
68420 Gueberschwihr
France

Phone (389) 49.31.42

Fax (389) 49.20.62

<74>

Bernard Humbrecht NV Cuvée des Amis, Crémant d'Alsace

Fresh and clean with good acidity.
Drink upon purchase.

Hunawihr

CV de Hunawihr
48 route de Ribeauvillé
68150 Hunawihr
France

Phone (389) 73.61.67

Fax (389) 73.33.95

<76>

CV de Hunawihr NV Calixte, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The current cuvée (2000-based with 30% reserves from 1999) has a good richness of clean fruit supported by crisp acidity.
Drink upon purchase.

<75>

CV de Hunawihr NV Calixte, Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé

Clean, easy drinking with a hint of strawberries. The sample was submitted as *millésime 2000*, but there was no mention of any vintage on bottle.
Drink upon purchase.

Hunter's

Rapaura Road
Blenheim

New Zealand

Phone (3) 572 8489

Fax (3) 572 8457

<88>

Hunter's 1998 Brut

Classy fruit and structure now, but really needs another year's post-disgorgement ageing to show true potential complexity.

Drink now-2006.

<80>

Miru Miru 1999 Brut

Lovely fruit guzzler. Has length and ages surprisingly well.

Drink now-2004.

Iron Horse

9786 Ross Station Road

Sebastopol

CA 95472

USA

Phone (707) 887 1507

Fax (707) 887 1337

<77>

Iron Horse 1992 Brut LD

The acidity is fantastic and the fruit has very good initial attack, but there it does not have the complexity or the finesse of the 1991 and there is an a hint of terpene-like aroma on the nose that also detracts from the finesse. This LD is very recently disgorged and maybe going through a developmental phase. It might well improve by leaps and bounds, but I will stick by my score for the next 12 months at least.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Iron Horse 1994 Blanc de Blancs

Very creamy fruit with a ball of bitter, undeveloped extract at the finish. This will go biscuity and has the potential for considerable creamy-biscuity complexity, but it needs a slightly higher dosage than that used for the pre-release I tasted. Although it was only a pre-release sample and could well end up with a totally different dosage, I have the feeling that it needs more than Forrest Tancer's ideals will permit. I can see how and why he has balanced the dosage with the wine's acidity, but it really needs more time on its second cork than this dosage would allow (without it going too oxidative). I would like to see it with four or five more grams of sugar per litre and kept a year after disgorgement before release.

Drink 2004-2006.

<75>

Iron Horse 1996 Brut Rosé

From in the last edition's 'exuberant mature fruit' to this years rather staid and a tad green fruit. I'm still waiting that wacky, crimson-pink fruit that made Iron Horse's rosé reputation!

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Iron Horse 1997 Classic Vintage Brut

Much softer and finer than the 1996, with refreshing, crispy-crunchy fruit riding on a lovely cushiony mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Iron Horse 1998 Wedding Cuvée

Fresh, light and fragrant.

Drink upon purchase.

J Wine Company

11447 Old Redwood Highway

Healdsburg

CA 95448

USA

Phone (707) 431 5400

Fax (707) 431 5410

<80>

J 1995 Brut (*magnum*)

Some terpene-like qualities creeping in.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

J 1997 Brut

Fresh, crisp, refreshing, crunchy fruit, bobbing around on a medium-firm mousse of very small bubbles. The best, most accessible vintage of J as a first release in a standard 75cl bottle.

Drink upon purchase.

Jacquart

Champagne Jacquart

6 rue de Mars

51066 Reims

France

Phone (326) 07.20.20

Fax (326) 57.78.14

<90>

Jacquart 1987 Brut

Love this. Great acidity. Rich, intense. A great Champagne to explore at the table. To think that this was merely okay, not special, when released!

Drink now-2004.

<90>

Jacquart 1992 Blanc de Blancs, Cuvée Mosaïque

Creamy-rich oxidative aromas followed by intense, oaky-rich fruit (or what seems oaky, anyway) on finish.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Jacquart 1992 Brut Mosaïque

Lovely fluffy mousse of minuscule creaming bubbles. Lean fruit propelled by refreshing acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Jacquart 1996 Brut Mosaïque Millésimé

Rich, deliciously succulent, brilliantly focused, sherbety fruit with bracing acidity, yet not too brut and a soft, creamy aftertaste. Exceptional finesse. A truly resounding success for an early-release 1996. One year later, the next disgorgement was much better on the palate than the nose or finish, demonstrating that Jacquart was absolutely right to release this early.

Drink now-2007.

<89>

Jacquart 1996 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Mosaïque

Great concentration of fruit, so pure and focused. A truly excellent vintage Champagne that is a delight to drink now and will continue to improve, but not quite in the same class as Jacquart's 1996 Brut Millésime.

Drink now-2008.

<87>

Jacquart NV Brut Mosaïque

The current release is 1997-based and was at its best over Christmas 2001, but had lost freshness by the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, when it had picked up a chocolaty nuance, which is fabulous if part of a slowly evolving rich aftertaste on a 50 year old Champagne, but odd and unwelcome on a current non-vintage cuvée. The previous release had gone malty at about the same time. The next release, however, is of an entirely different order of quality. Based on the 1998 vintage and due to be launched in October 2002, this cuvée is totally fruit-driven at the moment, but its depth, extract and acidity is exceptional for the (base) year and this will ensure a far more positive evolution than the current and previous releases.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Jacquart NV Brut Tradition

This is the one that Jacquart does not bother to mention on its own website, although I cannot understand why. It is amazingly fresh, floral and focused and an absolute relief after a run of dull and boring, far more famous Champagne names.

Drink now-2004.

<90>

Jacquart NV Brut de Nominée

By June 2002 it became clear that the second release of this brilliant new, stylishly packaged cuvée is every bit as outstanding as the first. After drinking several bottles throughout the following year, I can safely say that it is maintaining this standard.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Jacquart NV Brut Mosaïque Rosé

Soft and sweet, but balanced by acidity, with raspberries and strawberries from nose to aftertaste.

Drink now-2005.

Jacquesson

Champagne Jacquesson & Fils
68 rue du Colonel Fabien
51200 Dizy
France

Phone (326) 55.68.11

Fax (326) 51.06.25

This house is probably doing more than any other to improve quality from the ground up, operating a very expensive form of viticulture, from cover-cropping to ploughing, no herbicides, short pruning, double-debudding etc. Jacquesson is the first, I believe, to train Pinot Noir and Meunier on a permanent cordon, as opposed to employing a replacement branch, and growing the vines much closer together to restrict the branch length, which means fewer fruiting canes, but entails a lot more work to improve exposure and ventilation. What this means in real terms is that Jacquesson managed to harvest grapes that actually looked like grapes, even in the obscenely huge, rotten and underripe 2001 vintage. Not many others did, I can assure you.

<?>

Jacquesson 1990 Grand Vin Signature, Brut

Disgorged in July 2000, this had a toffee-like character at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but earlier disgorgements scored consistently high (91 points) in the 2000 and 2001 editions.

Wait for other disgorgements.

Wait and see.

<87>

Jacquesson 1993 Grand Vin Signature, Brut

Big for a 1993, with mature, mellow, biscuity-toffee complexity on the nose, followed by powerful fruit on the palate, hinting of coconut on the finish, with a truly excellent, cushiony mousse. Disgorged January 2001.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Jacquesson 1995 Grand Vin Signature, Brut

Creamy-walnut aromas with full, rich and satisfying fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Jacquesson 1995 Dizy "Corne Beautray"

Deepish lemon-yellow colour with exotics aromatics mingling with more classic creamy-walnut nuances. Splendid acidity. No dosage, but would have been better with even 3-4g/l.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

Jacquesson 1995 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Grand Cru

Up one percentile point on the last edition's rating (which in turn was up one on the year before), the fruit in this vintage is just settling down into a rich, vanilla-dusted mode.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Jacquesson 1998 Dizy "Le Clos de Jacquesson"

This is a very special wine. It is so expressive of Meunier, as might be expected of a single-vineyard, pure Meunier Champagne, yet so few exist and none come close to this in terms of either varietal character or intrinsic quality. This is everything that Moët's Les Champs de Romont should be, but is not.

Drink now-2007.

<87>

Jacquesson NV Brut Perfection Rosé

Fine, firm, perfumed fruit with excellent acidity.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Jacquesson NV Brut Perfection

The last edition's cuvée had become quite oxidative by the end of 2001 and the fresh and easy Brut Perfection tasted at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting was obviously a new blend, but it was just a bit too easy-going, not reaching the parts that others did at that event and this was exactly the same story at my own blind tasting in June 2002.

Drink upon purchase.

<90>

Jacquesson NV Brut Cuvée No. 728

This is the first release of Jacquesson's new non-vintage, so it's goodbye Brut Perfection, hello Brut Cuvée No. 728. Or rather it is for a year, then it will be onto Brut Cuvée No. 729 and so on: the 728 being 2000-based, the 729 2001-based, etc. I really wish they had started with Cuvée No. 000 - it would have it a lot easier to understand what we're drinking. This is Jacquesson's biggest mistake: remember Leclerc-Briant's "Les Authentiques"? They started off with the number 43 representing 1991 as the year of bottling and jumped 10 on an annual basis. People soon grew tired of trying to work it out. Oh, and as for blending to a consistent house non-vintage every year: forget it, that notion has been chucked out of the window with the bath-water. The latest philosophy is 'Instead of ironing out vintage variation, Jacquesson's new brut will represent the best possible blend every year.' Brave or stupid? No doubt we will find out, but certainly such a dramatic change could only be carried off by a small quality house. The big brands depend on every bottle tasting near enough the same. So what do we have here? Effectively, a secondary vintage that has the luxury of manipulation by reserve wines. Whatever you call it, this concept can only work if the number of true vintages declared returns to three or four out of every ten. That would free up more higher quality base wines to fulfil Jacquesson's stated aim of producing the best possible non-vintage blend every year. It would also send out a clear message that the new philosophy is not just marketing hype. Jacquesson has to be seen to be doing something that clearly demonstrates where the added quality is coming from. What's Cuvée No. 728 like? Very good, in fact. Very floral on the nose, extremely elegant and fresh Meunier on the palate, but also rich, with seductive, vanilla-dusted fruit on the finish. It's a Champagne that can be aged and with the numbering, I suspect that it will indeed be cellared by Jacquesson aficionados.

Drink now-2007.

Jacquinet

34 Maurice Cerveaux

51202 Epernay

Phone (326) 54.36.81

Fax (326) 55.67.33

<87>

Jacquinet 1990 Symphony Brut Grande Réserve

Very fresh, clean, sweet-ripe fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2004.

Jamain

Champagne Pierre Jamain

1 rue des Tuileries

51260 La Celle-sous-Chantemerle

France

Phone (326) 80.21.64

Fax (326) 80.29.32

<87>

Pierre Jamain NV Brut Rosé

The next release, due out in November 2002, is a sweet-ripe *assemblage* of 1997, 1998 and 1999, with a creamy aftertaste.

Drink now-2004.

Jeanmaire

Champagne Jeanmaire

Château Malakoff

3 rue Malakoff

51207 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 59.50.10

Fax (326) 54.78.52

<87>

Jeanmaire 1992 Champagne Elysée, Brut Millésime

If you can put up with the kitsch, brassy-metal casing around this bottle, you will be rewarded by rich, creamy, well-structured fruit that has good biscuitiness on the aftertaste, yet is capable of more complex development.

Drink now-2008.

<83>

Jeanmaire NV Cuvée Brut

Fresh, creamy-fruity.

Drink upon purchase.

Juvé & Camps

Sant Venat 1

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 8911000

Fax (93) 8912100

<80>

Juvé & Camps 1997 Cava Milesimé Brut

Oxidative terpenes with creamy fruit on finish. Vanilla aftertaste.

Drink now-2004.

Kageneck'sche

Gräflich von Kageneck'sche Wein & Sektkellerei

Kupfertorstrasse 35

79206 Breisach-am-Rhein

Phone (7667) 901128

Fax (7667) 901100

<79>

Gräfllich von Kageneck'sche Wein- und Sektkellerei 1999 Bugginger Maltesergarten Spätburgunder Brut

I'll start off with the negative point: amylic aromas, but these will subside and underneath there is lovely, crisp Pinot fruit with the softest, fluffiest mousse.

Drink now-2005.

Kesselstatt

Weingut Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt

Schloss Marienlay

54317 Morscheid

Germany

Phone 06500 91690

Fax 06500 916969

<77>

Weingut Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt 1995 Palais Kesselstatt Riesling Brut

Fresh, crisp, clean and surprisingly young fruit for a seven year old Sekt.

Drink upon purchase.

Kientzheim-Kaysersberg

CV Kientzheim-Kaysersberg

10 rue des Vieux Moulins

68240 Kientzheim

France

Phone (389) 47.13.19

Fax (389) 47.34.38

<78>

CV de Kientzheim-Kaysersberg NV Anne Boecklin, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The sample tasted was 1999-based with 25% reserves from 1998 and another 25% reserves from 1997, which accounts for the richness, which was noticeably greater than most other 1999-based Crémant d'Alsace. Bags of fruit, nice acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Knappstein

2 Pioneer Avenue

Clare

SA 5453

Australia

Phone (8) 8842 2600

Fax (8) 8842 3831

<80>

Knappstein 1999 Chainsaw Sparkling Shiraz

Bags of raspberry black cherry and Victoria plum fruit. Not too sweet. Absolutely ready to gulp!

Drink upon purchase.

Koehly

Charles Koehly
36 rue du Pinot Noir
68590 Rodern
France
Phone (389) 73.00.61
Fax (389) 73.05.38
<80>

Koehly NV Blanc de Noirs, Crémant d'Alsace

Lovely depth of Pinot fruit underscored by excellent acidity. The fruit should go creamy-tangy over the next 12 months or so.

Drink now-2004.

<74>

Koehly NV Crémant St-Urbain, Crémant d'Alsace

The 1999-based blend of this cuvée has clean fruit and good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Krug

Champagne Krug
5 rue Coquebert
51100 Reims
France
Phone (326) 84.44.20
Fax (326) 84.44.49

Part of LVMH under the wing of Veuve Clicquot, but still has members of the Krug family running the company on a day-to-day basis. Henri Krug has officially retired, but like his father Paul Krug II, he will continue to lend a hand at assemblage time.

<96>

Krug 1985 Brut

Simply sumptuous!

Drink now-2013.

<95>

Krug 1988 Brut

Stunning richness, complexity and acidity.

Drink now-2013.

<97>

Krug Clos du Mesnil 1988 Brut Blanc de Blancs

A luscious creaminess on the nose is followed by decadently rich fruit on the palate. Phenomenal acid balance. Incredibly complex, yet still only a baby. For those who believe in reincarnation because you can die for it several times and it will outlive you.

Drink now-2012.

<95>

Krug NV Grande Cuvée Brut

Exotic, oak-dominated, hell, it's just Krug!

Drink now-2013.

<87>

Krug Rosé NV Brut

The Krug Rosé is the least consistent of the entire range, although I have to qualify that by emphasising that this inconsistency is not intrinsic to the wine itself, but to when it is disgorged. When freshly disgorged, this cuvée is bursting with so much red fruit freshness that the oak plays a secondary role, but the balance is delicate and this fruit is soon subsumed by the oak, as in this case (Lot number LVUBAH).

Drink upon purchase.

LaCache

Cape Mentelle

PO Box 110

Margaret River

WA 6280

Australia

Phone (9757) 3266

Fax (9757) 3233

Made by 'Mad Harry' Osborne, formerly of Schramsberg (in the very early days) and Kendall-Jackson's wayward Kristone sparkling wine, who made LeCache in a corner of Cape Mentelle when no one was looking.

<78>

LaCache 1995

Creamy fruit, with good acidity and nicely balanced sweetness.

Drink upon purchase.

Laffond

Domaine Laffond

11190 Serres

France

Phone (468) 69.85.56

Fax (468) 69.81.06

<75>

Domaine Laffond NV Blanquette de Limoux

Lifted fruit makes for attractive early drinking only.

Drink upon purchase.

Lambert

Yves Lambert

Domaine de Saint-Just

Rue de la Prée

Mollay

49260 Saint-Just sur Dive

France

Phone (241) 51.62.01

Fax (241) 67.94.51

<75>

Yves Lambert NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Light, gentle fruit that will go toasty.

Drink upon purchase.

<79>

Yves Lambert NV Brut Rosé, Crémant de Loire

Vanilla-dusted elegant, fine clean fruit. Not at all oaky (have mentioned vanilla in both Yves Lambert wines), but more vanilla-sugar dusted fruit. Very fresh.

Drink upon purchase.

Langlois-Château

3 rue Léopold Palustre

St-Hilaire-St-Florent

49400 Saumur

France

Phone (241) 40.21.40

Fax (241) 40.21.49

<77>

Langlois NV Saumur Brut

Clean, focused and quite gluggy. Not a fresh sample. Langlois-Château likes to promote Crémant de Loire, not Saumur. Acquired elsewhere.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Langlois NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Clean, light and fruity without any of the metallic edge that dogged earlier cuvées.

Drink upon purchase.

Lanson

Champagne Lanson

12 Boulevard Lundy

51100 Reims

France

Phone (326) 78.50.50

Fax (326) 78.50.99

<92>

Noble Cuvée de Lanson 1989 Brut

Just beginning to develop nutty-biscuity complexity. Fabulous.

Drink now-2012

<90>

Lanson 1995 Gold Label Brut

Like a true Lanson vintage, the 1995 has improved dramatically in the first year of its release, jumping two percentile points from an excellent 88 to a stunning 90. Absolute quality shines through the fruit, which already shows some creamy-crumbly biscuits, hints of mellow toasty complexity, and a wonderfully smooth, vanilla-infused finish.

Drink now-2010.

<94>

Lanson 1996 Gold Label Brut

Classic 1996 crisp, tight acidity. Brilliant lemon-lime zesty fruit. Intense. Great for drinking now only if you're into razor-sharp acidity.

Drink now-2023.

<88>

Lanson NV Black Label

Rich and fine, with excellent acidity, and vanilla building on the finish, this year's release will age beautifully, although can also be consumed straight away with ease: your choice. I reserved opinion in the last edition's release because I was uncertain how it (EU Lot number L35231353) would evolve. Tasted one year late it had turned out much fresher than I imagined (84 points), but I would drink it up sooner rather than later.

Drink now-2008.

Lantieri de Paratico

Via S. Paratico

50 - 25031 Capriolo

Italy

Phone (030) 736151

Fax (030) 736151

<74>

Lantieri NV Franciacorta Satèn

Fresh with a true Satèn mousse, but needs more richness of fruit to warrant a higher score.

Drink upon purchase.

Larmandier-Bernier

Champagne Larmandier-Bernier

43 rue du 28 août

51130 Vertus

France

Phone (326) 52.13.24

Fax (326) 52.21.00

<84>

Larmandier-Bernier NV Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru

Concentrated, but rustic.

Drink now-2006.

Larroque

Mas des Combes

81600 Gaillac

France

Phone (563) 57.06.13

Fax (563) 57.48.31

<77>

Mas des Combes NV Gaillac Demi-Sec

The fruit in this wine reminds me of Beauty of Bath, a variety of apple my grandmother was particularly fond of.

Drink now-2004.

Lauffen

Wg. Lauffen
In Brühl 48
74348 Lauffen
Germany
Phone (7133) 1850
Fax (7133) 18560
<74>

Weingärtnergenossenschaft Lauffen 1999 Lauffener Katzenbeisser Spätburgunder Trocken

Strawberries nose and palate.
Drink upon purchase.

Laurent-Perrier

Champagne Laurent-Perrier
Domaine de Tours-sur-Marne
51150 Tours-sur-Marne
France
Phone (326) 58.91.22
Fax (326) 58.77.29

Rumours about a merger with Château Malakoff (Champagnes Beaumet, Jeanmaire and Oudinot).

<85>

Laurent-Perrier 1993 Brut

Nice, fresh, rich vintage style.
Drink now-2006.

<89>

Grand Siècle Alexandra 1990 Brut Rosé par Laurent-Perrier

This vintage has not evolved since the last edition. Still waiting for the pepperiness to subside, when I expect the score to creep up. In the meantime, why does this expensive Champagne have a cheap and nasty wire cage that is neither anodised nor lacquered?

Drink 2005-2007.

<96>

Grand Siècle NV La Cuvée par Laurent-Perrier, Brut

The sample submitted (LX35101) beautifully toasty, with great acidity and laser-focused fruit, without any hint of pepperiness. Still years away from perfection, this is Grand Siècle at its best, and in 2003 it was simply sublime. We appear to have moved away from the pepperiness first experienced in the 1990 vintaged version of Grand Siècle, and present to one degree or another in some "La Cuvée" blends. However, I can testify from my own cellar that even the most peppery releases eventually do achieve a lovely harmony that is well worth the wait.

Drink 2004-2013.

<?>

Laurent-Perrier NV Ultra Brut

Tasted several times, the worst example being at the 2002 London Wine Trade Fair, when it smelled of cauliflower. Most other times it was simply dull on the nose with an ungainly pepperiness and lack of finesse on the palate. Once, just once, it was fresh and crisp with excellent fruit. I have come to the conclusion that although some shipments are definitely better

than others, this wine is particularly sensitive to variations in transport and storage conditions. Probably best to buy only in France and definitely insist on tasting first (then make sure the EU Lot number is exactly the same).

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Laurent-Perrier NV Brut L.P.

More body and richness than normal.

Drink now-2006.

Lavernoya

Cavas Lavernoya

Sant Pere 17

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 891 2202

Fax (93) 891 1159

<75>

Lacrima Baccus Primerisimo Gran Cuvée 1999 Cava Brut

Soft and creamy. Fresh.

Drink upon purchase.

Lehmann

Peter Lehmann Wines

Para Road

Tanunda

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8563 2500

Fax (8) 8563 3402

<80>

Black Queen 1994

Floral, cherry fruit, with grippy tannins providing added structure.

Drink upon purchase.

Lemaire

Champagne R.C. Lemaire

19 rue Pasteur

51200 Damery

France

Phone (326) 58.41.31

Fax (326) 58.39.28

<90>

R.C. Lemaire 1996 Chardonnay, Millésime Premier Cru Brut

Rich, lemony, *barrique*-fermented fruit with little oakiness and searing acidity.

Drink now-2007.

<83>

R.C. Lemaire NV Brut Rosé

Rich and tasty with good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

<83>

R.C. Lemaire NV Sélect Réserve, Brut

Biscuity-rich, high-acid fruit going even biscuitier.

Drink now-2005.

Lenoble

Champagne A.R. Lenoble

34 rue Paul-Douce

51480 Damery

France

Phone (326) 58.42.60

Fax (326) 58.65.57

<85>

A.R. Lenoble 1995 Gentilhomme, Brut Grand Cru

The fruit is mellowed by aromas of vanilla and toast, yet still remains fresh.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

A.R. Lenoble NV Brut Rosé

Gluggy!

Drink upon purchase.

<83>

A.R. Lenoble NV Réserve Extra Brut

Fresh, light and clean, with gentle, creamy fruit.

Drink now-2004.

Lingenfelder

Weingut Lingenfelder

Hauptstrasse 27

67229 Grosskarlbach

Germany

Phone (6238) 754

Fax (6238) 1096

<82>

Lingenfelder NV Satyr Brut

Very clear, clean Riesling fruit, lovely acidity. Made without the addition of any sugar.

Drink upon purchase.

Loriot

Champagne Michel Loriot

13 rue de Bel-Air

51200 Festigny

France

Monsieur

Fax (326) 58.03.98

<84>

Michel Lorient NV Rosé Brut

Fresh, easy-drinking, with a hint of strawberries.

Drink upon purchase.

Mailly

Champagne Mailly

28 rue de la Liberation

51500 Mailly-Champagne

France

Phone (326) 49.41.10

Fax (326) 49.42.27

I have never been so impressed by this mono-cru cooperative than I am now. The quality and innovation has been on a roll for the last couple of years.

<88>

Mailly Grand Cru 1996 Brut

Very good fruit, structure and finesse.

Drink now-2016.

<90>

Mailly Grand Cru 1996 La Terre Brut

Ditto above, but smoother, with finer acids.

Drink now-2016.

<90>

Mailly Grand Cru 1996 Les Echansons Brut

More finesse than the standard 1996 Brut.

Drink now-2016.

<90>

Mailly Grand Cru 1996 L'Intemporelle Brut

Fatter, yet still crisp thanks to the acids.

Drink now-2016.

<87>

Mailly Grand Cru 1995 Cuvée Les Echansons, Brut

Although oxidative, it has smooth fruit with biscuity complexity on the palate.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Mailly Grand Cru 1995 Brut Millésime, Grand Cru

There was nothing wrong with this vintage at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but it did not grab me and seemed to be much less expressive than the year before when its complex fruit and smooth creamy-vanilla finish earned it an honourable 83 points. It did, however, stand out at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting, where its smooth, violey fruit was both delicious and elegant, deserving 89 points at least.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Mailly Grand Cru NV Brut Réserve, Grand Cru

Rich Pinot fruit with excellent acidity. Promises to deepen in flavour, gradually acquiring biscuity complexity.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Mailly Grand Cru NV Blanc de Noirs, Grand Cru

Although drinkable now, this year's release is a bit firm and would gain much mellowness, finesse and complexity from an extra year in bottle.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Mailly Grand Cru NV Extra Brut, Grand Cru

The peardrop aromas do not enthuse me, but they will subside and the fruit underneath has real creamy richness.

Drink now-2005.

Mandois

Champagne Henri Mandois

66 rue du Gal-de-Gaulle

51200 Pierry

France

Phone (326) 54.03.18

Fax (326) 51.53.66

I am seldom dissatisfied by Mandois, but I have to confess that I was disappointed by an experimental cuvée that I tasted in March 2003. It was a single vineyard (Les Clos), pure varietal (Meunier) Champagne, and I have been waiting for producers to craft a premium Champagne out of this allegedly lesser grape. I therefore had high hopes for Mandois' effort make the best Meunier possible, but it was nothing special, just an agreeably fresh and fruity fizz. However, its lacklustre performance could well be due to its vintage, 2000, which was not the most awe-inspiring year for Champagne, or the fact that it has had barely one year on yeast and will need at least another two before it can be released as a vintage Champagne.

<90>

Henri Mandois 1996 Cuvée Victor Mandois, Brut

Tightening up, but has great concentration and extract, with fresh citrus fruit on the nose and lemon-sherbet fruit on the palate. It almost achieves the last edition's high-flying 91 point score. Give the current release at least one year on its cork, then follow its slow development by not drinking all bottles at once!

Drink 2004-2013.

<89>

Henri Mandois 1997 Blanc de Blancs, Brut Premier Cru

Really quite gluggy (aren't all Mandois Champagnes?), but there some serious development of yeast-complexed fruit that hold the attention on the finish and aftertaste. This should age well. Really splendid for the year.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Henri Mandois 1998 Millésime Brut Premier Cru

Rich fruit with a hint of the exotic.

Drink now-2007.

<85>

Henri Mandois NV Brut Rosé, Premier Cru

Fresh, rich, tasty and creamy, with hints of strawberry, but lacks the bursting summer fruits this *cuvée* normally displays.

Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Henri Mandois NV Cuvée de Réserve, Brut

Fresh and fruity with an invigorating, crisp, sherbety finish. My only complaint about Mandois is that it is always far too easy to drink!

Drink now-2005.

Margaine

Champagne A. Margaine

3 avenue de Champagne

51380 Villers-Marmery

France

Phone (326) 97.92.13

Fax (326) 97.97.45

<85>

A. Margaine NV Brut Premier Cru

Rich and clean fruit with a classic lean structure. Excellent length.

Drink now-2006.

Marne et Champagne

22 rue Maurice-Cerveaux

51205 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 78.50.50

Fax (326) 54.55.77

<87>

Gauthier 1993 Brut

Very soft, fluffy fresh yet smoky fruit.

Drink now-2005.

<84>

Gauthier NV Brut

Good basic Champagne. Youthful, will go toasty. Excellent acidity. Concentrated.

Drink now-2006.

Marniquet

Champagne Marniquet

8 rue des Crayères

51480 Venteuil

France

Phone (326) 58.48.99

<87>

Jean-Pierre Marniquet 1992 Brut Millésime

Creamy-liquorice aroma followed by rich, nicely acidic fruit, with something peachy-firm and yet tropical on the finish. Acidity finally dominates.
Drink now-2006.

Marques de Monistrol

Marqués de Monistrol
08970 Sant Joan Despí
Spain

Phone (93) 477 6362

Fax (93) 477 6363

<75>

Marques de Monistrol 1997 Cava Gran Reserva Privada Brut

Some glugginess.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Marques de Monistrol NV Cava Reserva Brut Selección Especial

Rich and fruity, supported by smooth-creamy mousse.

Drink now-2004.

<78>

Marques de Monistrol NV Cava Gran Reserva de la Familia Rosado Brut

Best rosé, perfumed fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Martel

Champagne GH Martel
69 avenue de Champagne
51318 Epernay Cedex
France

Phone (326) 51.06.33

Fax (326) 54.41.52

Owned by Christophe Rapeneau, the least known biggest man in Champagne. In addition to Martel, he owns the eponymous house of Rapeneau, which specialises in supermarket brands, and Mansard-Baillet. He also produces Champagnes under the following brands: Charles Orban, Comte de Lamotte, Comte de Noiron, Marcel Pierre, Charles de Roy, Francois Lemmer, and Maxim's (formerly the preserve of De Castellane), whilst the Paul Louis Martin label is reserved for Coteaux Champenois. Monsieur Rapeneau has recently purchased the Aubeis Château de Bligny and its two hectare vineyard.

<84>

Château de Bligny NV Brut Réserve

Very rich, with plenty of fruit. A good basic Champagne

Now-2003

Massana Noya

Finca Maset del Lleó s/n
08739 Sant Pau d'Ordal
Spain

Phone (3) 899 4124

Fax (3) 899 4139

<75>

Eudald Massana Noya 1998 Cava Brut Nature

Sweet fruit with oxidative development. Fruit on finish. Coconutty aftertaste.

Drink upon purchase.

Massin

Champagne Rémy Massin & Fils

Grande Rue

10110 Ville-sur-Arce

France

Phone (325) 38.74.09

Phone (325) 38.77.67

<85>

Rémy Massin et Fils NV Brut Réserve

Expressive Mailly fruit dominates this Champagne. Fresh, easy drinking style with sweet fruit on the finish.

Drink now-2006.

Mathieu

Champagne Serge Mathieu

Les Riceys

10340 Avirey-Lingey

France

Phone (325) 29.32.58

Fax (325) 29.11.57

<89>

Serge Mathieu 1996 Brut

Really needs time; would benefit from extra time on yeast.

Drink 2004-2009.

<90>

Serge Mathieu NV Cuvée Tradition, Blanc de Noirs Brut

The current cuvée (a blend of 1996/7/8) is deliciously rich and elegant, with oodles of clean, precise fruit.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Serge Mathieu NV Cuvée Prestige Brut

More complex than Cuvée Tradition, but although rich, much less emphasis on fruit. Will go creamy-biscuity. Current cuvée is a blend of 1996/7.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Serge Mathieu NV Tête de Cuvée Select, Brut

The current cuvée (a blend of 1995/6) is just developing biscuity richness.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Serge Mathieu NV Rosé Brut

Strawberry-Pinot, fruit-driven. Very gluggy. Everything a ready-drinking rosé should be. The current cuvée is in fact pure 1998, although it does not claim to be vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

Meersburg

Staatsweingut Meersburg

Seminarstrasse 6

88709 Meersburg

Germany

Phone (7532) 357

Fax (7532) 358

<74>

Staatsweingut Meersburg 1999 Baden Brut

Stands out for intensity of fruit, some of it green (but will go toasty).

Drink now-2004.

Melton

Charles Melton

Krondorf Road

Tanunda

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8563 3606

Fax (8) 8563 3422

<89>

Charles Melton NV Sparkling Red

Clean, pure fruit, with oak showing on the aftertaste. A beautifully smooth mousse adds to the finesse.

Drink now-2004.

Mercier

Champagne Mercier

68/70 avenue de Champagne

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 51.22.00

Fax (326) 54.84.23

<83>

Mercier NV Brut Rosé

Toasty.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Mercier NV Brut

Mercier is typically fatter than Moët, but this year it is fatter still. However, it does have the structure and acidity to take this additional fatness without seeming either flabby or overweight. The last edition's release had developed a lovely touch of vanilla mid-palate by the end of 2001. Drink now-2005.

Mesnil

Champagne Le Mesnil
Union des Propriétaires Récoltants
51390 Le Mesnil-sur-Oger
France

Phone (326) 57.53.23

<93>

Le Mesnil 1990 Vigne Sélectionnée Blanc de Blancs, Grand Cru Brut

Sensational, creamy-walnut and coconut fruit. So very fresh. A beautiful wine.
Drink now-2013.

<90>

Le Mesnil 1995 Réserve Sélection, Blanc de Blancs, Grand Cru Brut

Lovely fruit, finesse and complexity. This will go super-silky smooth.
Drink now-2013.

<87>

Le Mesnil NV Blanc de Blancs, Grand Cru Brut

This biscuity-rich cuvée is 1997-based and rather than use reserve wine, the opposite philosophy has been applied, refreshing the blend with some 1996 instead. Great finesse.
Drink now-2006.

Metternich

Weingut Graf Metternich
Grol 4
77770 Durbach
Germany

Phone 07814 2779

Fax 07814 2553

<75>

Fürst von Metternich Sektkellerei 1999 Riesling Brut

Initially very fine Riesling aromas, but the varietal character dissipates quickly. Good, rich fruit underneath.

Drink upon purchase.

Meyer Fonné

Domaine Meyer Fonné
24 Grand'Rue
68230 Katzenthal
France

Phone (389) 27.16.50

Fax (389) 27.34.17

<78>

Meyer Fonné NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut Extra

The current release is 1999-based, very fresh, fine and elegant, with good acidity.
Drink upon purchase.

Mignon & Pierrel

Champagne Mignon & Pierrel

24 Rue Henri Dunant

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 51.93.39

Fax (326) 51.69.40

<85>

Mignon & Pierrel NV Cuvée Florale Brut Rosé, Premier Cru

Lovely lifted fruit of impressive depth.

Drink now-2005.

Milan

Champagne Milan

6 route d'Avize

51190 Oger

France

Phone (326) 57.50.09

Fax (326) 57.78.47

<86>

Terres de Noël, Brut Sélection 1995 Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs - Milan

This the third year I have tasted this wine and a fascinating experience it has been too. In the 2001 edition, I reserved judgement because of its high-tone character on the front-palate, yet there was something about its citrusy fruit from mid-palate to finish that gave me reason for 'much hope' and in the last edition I started to see this hope rewarded, although it still needed time for the nose to come together, hence its modest 83 points. The bouquet has since mellowed, while the fruit has deepened and become more yeast-complex. Don't drink all at once. Will still improve.

Drink now-2007.

<82>

Terres de Noël, Brut Sélection 1998 Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs - Milan

More richness of fruit than most 1998 *blanc de blancs*. Good acidity, crisp finish. Will go toasty.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Jean Milan NV Brut Spécial, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

The current blend (97/98) has the edge over the next blend (98/99), but both have lovely soft, rich fruit with an ultra-smooth, cushiony-creamy mouse.

Drink now-2004.

Mirabella

Via Cantarane

2 - 25050 Rodengo Saiano

Italy

Phone (30) 611197

Fax (30) 611388

<75>

Mirabella NV Franciacorta Brut Rosé

Fresh, crisp and tasty with hints of raspberry on the finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Miranda

Barossa Valley Highway

Rowland Flat

SA 5352

Australia

Phone (8) 8524 4537

Fax (8) 8524 4066

<73>

Miranda 1997 Family Reserve Sparkling Shiraz

Very persistent fizz, not as sweet as some.

Drink upon purchase.

Mirault

Maison Mirault

30 rue de la Bonne Dame

37210 Vouvray

France

Phone (247) 52.71.62

Fax (247) 52.60.90

<75>

Mirault NV Vouvray Brut

Rich and tasty with nice foamy mousse of tiny bubbles.

Drink upon purchase.

Moët & Chandon

Champagne Moët & Chandon

20 avenue de Champagne

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 51.20.00

Fax (326) 51.20.37

Champagne's largest producer has not sat on its laurels. It has introduced a number of innovative products over the last few years. However, it has failed to grasp opportunities (at a time when consumer interest was focused on Champagne's diversity, the non-vintage Premier Cru should have been a synergic step towards a range of vintaged premier cru and grand cru Champagnes), it can lose interest in a product (the Premier Cru quality really should be more exciting) and some new wines have shown errors of judgement (non-vintage single-vineyard Champagnes!).

Can Moët see what must be done to lead Champagne into a future that will demand unprecedented levels of transparency?

<80>

Moët & Chandon NV White Star, Extra Dry

Really quite good considering the reputation of Moët's cheapest cuvée. Fresh, crisp, clean and not too sweet.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Moët & Chandon NV Brut Impérial

Fruiter than normal, but not as fat as Mercier, this cuvée will go toasty just as quick as all the rest.

Drink now-2005.

<87>

Moët & Chandon 1996 Millésime Blanc, Brut Imperial

Intense and well-structured. Leave it to go a little toasty before drinking. This is the regular vintaged Brut Impérial: the "Millésime Blanc" is just a tweak in presentation.

Drink 2004-2009.

<85>

Moët & Chandon NV Brut Impérial Rosé

Rich, creamy and satisfying. Really quite a serious rosé.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Moët & Chandon, Les Champs de Romont NV Sillery Grand Cru - Brut

Very fresh, easy, gentle fruit. Light and elegant. Mid-palate fruit softened by fluffy mousse.

Fresh, crisp finish.

Drink now-2004.

<90>

Moët & Chandon, Les Sarments d'Aÿ NV Aÿ Grand Cru, Brut

Power, finesse and class, with elegant strawberry fruit still in evidence. Although this has power, its fine structure and acidity ensure that this *blanc de noirs* is not a massive wine like the Beast of Bollinger.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Moët & Chandon, Les Vignes de Saran NV Chouilly Grand Cru - Brut

In a reverse of the usual way a *blanc de blancs* Champagne develops, the last edition's citrusy aromas have become floral. Considerable autolysis on nose, with creamy fruit building on palate.

Some toasty notes mid-palate.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Moët & Chandon 1996 Millésime Rosé, Brut

Tight, rich fruit that will go biscuity.

Drink now-2005.

<95>

Cuvée Dom Pérignon 1995 Brut, Moët & Chandon

Powerful lemony-toasty fruit, intense acidity.

Drink now-2009.

<98>

Cuvée Dom Pérignon 1992 Rosé Brut, Moët & Chandon

Lovely pale peach colour with fresh, deliciously delicate, wild strawberry fruit following from a seductive nose through a youthful palate to a long finish of great finesse. Little hint of its 10 years of age.

Drink now-2010.

Moli Coloma

Barrio el Rebato

08739 Subirats

Spain

Phone (93) 891 1092

Fax (93) 891 1092

<70>

Sumarroca 1997 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva

Raspberry coulis.

Drink upon purchase.

<70>

Sumarroca 1999 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva

Raspberry jam.

Drink upon purchase.

Moncontour

Château de Moncontour

37210 Vouvray

France

Phone (247) 52.60.77

<72>

Château de Moncontour 1995 Cuvée Prédilection Grande Réserve - Vouvray Brut

High acids. Tangy. For lovers of (clean) mature Chenin only.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Château de Moncontour 1999 Cuvée Prédilection Grande Réserve - Vouvray Brut

Freshness, elegance, yet fullness of fruit. Very expressive of Chenin without any greengage.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Château de Moncontour NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Vanilla-dusted greengage fruit. For lovers of Chenin Blanc, even though 20% Chardonnay.

Drink upon purchase.

Moncuit

Champagne Pierre Moncuit

11 rue Persault-Maheu

51190 Le Mesnil-sur-Oger

France

Phone (326) 57.52.65

Fax (326) 57.97.89

<86>

Pierre Moncuit, Cuvée Nicole Moncuit 1995 Vieille Vigne, Brut Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

The last edition's 'too dominant buttery-malo aromas' have become more creamy-biscuity in this year's release. It's amazing what different disgorgements can do to a Champagne, although quite how Moncuit has managed to redress the 'quite fat' character is anyone's guess. Some high-octane 1996 for the dosage base wine, perhaps? Although vintage Champagne should technically be 100% from the year indicated, the authorities turn an official blind-eye to the base for the dosage, thus it might only be 98.5% of the year indicated. Not suggesting that is what Moncuit has done, but it's a possibility.

Drink now-2006.

<87>

Pierre Moncuit 1996 Brut Grand Cru, Blanc de Blancs

None of the buttery-malo aromas that dogged the 1995 vintage (84 points), this is fresh and crisp with lovely, lively-rich fruit that's tasty and satisfying.

Drink now-2006.

<82>

Pierre Moncuit, Cuvée Nicole Moncuit 1998 Vieille Vigne, Brut Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

This showed more richness of fruit than most 1998 *blanc de blancs*, but the dosage was somewhat prominent, particularly on the nose, as is often the case with pre-release samples, and it was difficult to see through this.

Drink upon purchase.

Monmousseau

37210 Vouvray

France

Phone (247) 52.67.50

Fax (247) 52.67.98

<78>

Monmousseau NV Cuvée JM Brut, Touraine

Some finesse on nose, very fresh and clean; elegant fruit on palate with dusted vanilla sugar on finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Mont Marçal

Finca Manlleu

08732 Castellvi de la Marca

Spain

Phone (938) 918 281

Fax (938) 919 045

<82>

Extremarium Brut de Mont-Marçal NV Cava Brut

Delicious fruit, really quite stylish, nice ripe acidity.

Drink now-2004.

Mont-Ferrant

Córcega 73
08029 Barcelona
Spain

Phone (93) 4191000

Fax (93) 4193170

The oldest, surviving Cava house.

<75>

Mont-Ferrant Blanes Nature NV Cava Extra Brut

Really good, fresh fruit with very smooth creamy mousse. The current release has decent fresh fruit with a very smooth creamy mousse, but the next release promises to be even better with richer biscuity fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Montana

Montana Marlborough Winery
Main Road South
State Highway 1
Riverlands
Blenheim
New Zealand

Phone (3) 578 2099

Fax (3) 578 0463

<90>

Montana Deutz 1996 Blanc de Blancs

Gorgeous fruit, beautifully made. Fruit, finesse and style.

Drink now-2006.

<75>

Lindauer NV Rosé

Firm fruit, pleasantly tart acids, Pinot fruit dominating, but could be a straight (ie., white) Brut except for the colour.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Lindauer NV Brut

Exuberantly fruity. Will go creamy-biscuity.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Lindauer NV Special Reserve

Serious quality, lovely vanilla dusted fruit. Great length and acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Montana Deutz NV Marlborough Cuvée

This cuvée did not show well at the Waitrose Spring Tasting, but the most recent release tasted at the centralised ANZ tasting was of the best ever. Delicious fruit, so tasty, clean and focused, with a clear crisp finish.

Drink now-2006.

Montgueret

Château de Montgueret
25 rue de la Mairie
49560 Neuil-sur-Layon
France

Phone (241) 59.26.26

Fax (241) 59.01.94

<75>

Château de Montguéret 1998 Tête de Cuvée, Saumur Brut

Drink now for intense fruit or in one year for toastiness.

Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Château de Montguéret NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Light, elegant, gentle fruit, with nice tangy acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Morton

State Highway 2
RD2 Katikati
Bay of Plenty
New Zealand

Phone (7) 552 0795

Fax (7) 552 0651

<80>

Morton Estate NV Premium Brut

Fine, firm, long flavour, nice tight fruit. Could age well.

Drink now-2006.

Mosnel

Il Mosnel di E. Barboglio
Via Barboglio
14 - 25050 Camignone
Italy

Phone (30) 653117

Fax (30) 654236

<79>

Il Mosnel 1998 Franciacorta Brut Satèn

Rather too dominant coconutty-oak aroma (if these barrels were purchased as French, I'd get then DNA-tested!), but high quality, rich fruit underneath.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Il Mosnel NV Franciacorta Brut

Rich fruit, but rather aggressive mousse (needed more time on yeast).

Drink upon purchase.

Mount Riley

441 Lake Road

Takapuna

New Zealand

Phone (9) 4860286

Fax (9) 4860643

<90>

Saveé 2000 Sparkling Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough

Absolutely Sauvignon Blanc. Absolutely Marlborough. Absolutely fresh. Absolutely fabulous summertime drinking.

Drink upon purchase.

Mountain Dome

Mountain Dome Winery

16315 E. Temple Road

Spokane

WA 99217

USA

Phone (509) 928 2788

Fax (509) 922 8078

<85>

Mountain Dome 1997 Brut

Not due to be released until late November 2002, this vintage has the crispest, clearest, most zippy-zingy-tangy fruit so far from Mountain Dome and I just love it! Lemons, limes, white peach kernel, touch of grapefruit. Nothing exotic (a positive comment in New World climes).

Classic structure. Great acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<?>

Mountain Dome NV Brut

Don't know what's going on here. The basic non-vintage from our folks on hill has a curious blend of amylic, barrique and VA-lifted fruit aromas, the latter of which dominate the finish.

Wait and see.

Moutard

Champagne Moutard

Buxeuil

10110 Bar-sur-Seine

France

Phone (25) 38.50.73

Fax (25) 38.57.72

<87>

Moutard NV Brut Grande Cuvée

Deliciously fruity. Not great finesse, but a great gulping fizz.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

Moutard NV Cuvée aux 6 Cépages

A taste of history, made in equal parts from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Meunier and Champagne's lesser known Pinot Blanc, Petit Meslier and Arbane. From the 2000 harvest, fermented in two year old Burgundian *barriques*, sealed with corks rather than crown-caps for the second fermentation and lightly dosaged (six grams). The oak is not noticeable unless tasted blind with other non-*barrique* Champagnes, the fruit on the palate is rich yet light, fresh, soft and smooth. Drink now-2005.

Moutardier

Champagne Jean Moutardier
51210 Le Breuil
France

Phone (326) 59.21.09

Fax (326) 59.21.25

<87>

Jean Moutardier 1996 Brut Millésime

Nothing lifted here. Very good acidity. A fine wine that needs time.

Drink 2004-2010.

<83>

Jean Moutardier 1995 Brut Millésime

Lifted fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<84>

Jean Moutardier NV Carte d'Or

Plenty of fruit, but could do with more finesse.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Jean Moutardier NV Sélection Brut

Very rich, with a structure and balance that is more classic than those of the Carte d'Or.

Drink now-2005.

Mumm

Champagne G.H. Mumm
29 rue du Champ-de-Mars
51053 Reims
France

Phone (326) 49.59.69

Fax (326) 40.46.13

<90>

G.H. Mumm 1995 Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé

Still fresh, zesty and fluffy. This vintage showed beautifully at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting. One year late it had lovely, super-smooth, violet-vanilla fruit. Great finesse.

Drink now-2013.

<89>

G.H. Mumm 1996 Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé

Truly excellent, but I still maintain (having harped on before) that this is being released too early. It could gain so much from a couple more years yeast contact that I suspect I would be scoring it in the early 90s. However, it should gain at least one more percentile point from ageing on cork and there is no denying the quality and intensity. For anyone following Mumm over the last decade it is an astonishing achievement. As James Halliday said to me at the National Wine Show in Canberra, November 2001, 'having recently tasted the 1996 Mumm Cordon Rouge I understand why you have been singing its praises so loudly'.

Drink 2005-2015.

<87>

G.H. Mumm NV Grand Cru Brut

This new non-vintaged Grand Cru cuvée has none of the malolactic aromas that so obvious in the last edition's preview sample. The fruit is much richer than the standard Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé and it is, in it's own way, every bit as successful as the first release of Moët's Premier Cru cuvée. However, Moët did not keep up the standard. Hopefully Mumm will.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

G.H. Mumm NV Brut Rosé

Very fresh, glacier-clean, strawberry-dominated red-fruits, with a lovely, crisp, acidic finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

G.H. Mumm NV Demi-Sec

Beautifully clean with a crisp sweetness and sumptuously smooth mousse.

Drink now-2007.

<83>

G.H. Mumm NV Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé

The 1998-based Cordon Rouge Brut Millésimé (85 points) had a lovely cushiony mousse and fresh, creamy-mellow fruit at WINE magazine's Champagne tasting, but the blend had changed to the 1999-based at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, when it was such a distinctly copper-tinged colour that it drew astonished remarks from everyone around. By June, however, it had changed again. Or at least the samples submitted had. Noticeably pale in colour, with very fresh aromas (almost amylic), this was presumably was the 2000-based cuvée, albeit released much earlier than expected. It is very fresh, crisp and elegant, but not in the same class as the 1998-based cuvée (as it was at the beginning of the year).

Drink upon purchase.

<84>

G.H. Mumm, Mumm de Cramant NV Brut Chardonnay, Grand Cru

The 1997-based 2002 release was fresh, almost green, early-picked rendition, with crisp, lemony-lime fruit (87 points), but the 1998-based 2003 release has too many green elements. The grapes for this cuvée should be harvested later, while the wine should be released earlier (maximum two years on yeast).

Drink now-2004.

Mumm Napa Winery

8445 Silverado Trail

Rutherford

CA 94573

USA

Phone (800) 686 6272

Fax (707) 942 3470

In June 1999 Seagram sold Mumm and Perrier-Jouët to a private investment firm, which then sold it on to Allied Domecq. Mumm Cuvée Napa was not part of the deal and was in fact sold by Seagram to another UK drinks giant, the Diageo group. This was a source of confusion for consumers, particularly as Mumm Cuvée Napa's label incorporates G.H. Mumm's trademarked cordon rouge, but the issue was resolved when Diageo sold Mumm Cuvée Napa to Allied Domecq in February 2002.

<88>

DVX by Mumm Cuvée Napa 1996 Brut

Up two points on the last edition's score and seems quite capable of creeping up at least one more over the next year or two. High acids and richness of extract so evident.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

Mumm Cuvée Napa 1996 Vintage Reserve Brut

This vintage is significantly superior to the 1995 at the same age. It is a wine that doesn't tell you everything with the first sip. Quite easy to dismiss, but the fruit is very concentrated and potentially complex, with excellent depth and great acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<78>

Mumm Cuvée Napa 1997 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Nothing if not consistent, this year's Blanc de Blancs like the last edition's needs to be aged for a year to bring complexity and finesse to the rich Chardonnay fruit that is currently somewhat staid and solid.

Drink 2004-2006.

<80>

Mumm Cuvée Napa NV Blanc de Noirs Brut

Rich, tasty and serious with a nice nugget of extract promising to open up.

Drink now-2004.

<77>

Mumm Cuvée Napa NV Brut Prestige

Loved the fine, fresh aromas and the firm yet cushiony mousse, but the fruit on the palate lacked the creaminess of the last edition's cuvée, although it showed good, crispy-crunchy fruit with plums and buckets of acid (literally!).

Drink upon purchase.

Muré

René Muré

RN 83

68250 Rouffach

France

Phone (389) 78.58.00

Fax (389) 78.58.01

<79>

René Muré 1997 Cuvée Prestige, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Disgorged in November 2001 (this is indicated top-left of label), this wine has a pronounced, fruity nose with very rich, mature fruit on the palate, and this is supported by excellent acidity, but it is a wine to be drunk sooner rather than later.

Drink upon purchase.

Neipperg

Weingut des Grafen Neipperg

Im Schloss

74193 Schwaigern

Germany

Phone (7138) 941400

Fax (7138) 944007

<78>

Weingut des Grafen Neipperg 2000 Riesling Brut

Clean, fresh, deep and long Riesling fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Nerleux

Domaine de Nerleux

4 rue de la Paleine

49260 Saint Cyr-en-Bourg

France

Phone (241) 51.61.04

Fax (241) 51.65.34

<78>

Domaine de Nerleux NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Strong, rich, clean. Fine mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Neuville

De Neuville

BP 47 St-Hilaire-St-Florent

49426 Saumur

France

Phone (241) 53.03.10

Fax (241) 53.03.19

<75>

de Neuville NV Cuvée Prestige, Crémant de Loire Brut

1st corked. 2nd excellent fruit. Clean, fresh.

Drink upon purchase.

Neuweier-Bühlertal

Wg. Neuweier-Bühlertal

Mauerbergstrasse 32

76534 Baden-Baden Neuweier

Germany

Phone 07223 52074

<72>

Winzergenossenschaft Neuweier-Bühlertal 2000 Neuweierer Schloss Rodeck Riesling Trocken

Easy-going.

Drink upon purchase.

Nyetimber

Nyetimber Vineyard

Gay Street

West Chiltington

Pulborough

Sussex

RH20 2HH

Great Britain

Phone (1798) 813989

Fax (1798) 815511

Established in 1988 by an American couple, Stuart and Sandy Moss, who have won almost everything except the Noble Prize for the excellence of Nyetimber sparkling wine. It could be argued that they have contributed more to the reputation of English sparkling wine than all the British-born vineyard owners put together, so who could blame Stuart and Sandy when they received an offer for Nyetimber they couldn't refuse. It came out of the blue from English songwriter Andy Hill, who was looking for a unique home rather than a vineyard. He is an unassuming, down to earth sort of guy for someone who has written songs for likes of Diana Ross, Celine Delon, Cher and Ronan Keating. He loves wine, which was a relief from my point of view, considering what he has inherited with his purchase. Andy Hill might be more at home with a Pauillac, but he gives the impression that he will do everything possible to maintain the extraordinary quality and reputation of Nyetimber. And he has shown that he can be ruthless in this pursuit, dumping the 1994 when he realised that it was not holding up as well as the two previous years. He had customers who said they liked the 1994 warts and all, but there was no way he would risk it, so he moved on to the 1995 and 1996 and swept the board at the UK Vineyards Awards.

<89>

Nyetimber 1992 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

Disgorged in February 1997, this is really has stunning, creamy-peachy fruit and is incredibly long. Much preferred to the 2002 disgorgement which has a creamy-caramel character.

Drink upon purchase.

<89>

Nyetimber 1993 Classic Cuvée Brut

Amazingly ethereal, with fine, elegant, peachy-rich fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<88>

Nyetimber 1993 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

Complex, creamy-rich, smooth and toasty, the August 1999 disgorgement has no hint of the herbaceousness noticed earlier in its development.

Drink now-2004.

<87>

Nyetimber 1995 Classic Cuvée Brut

Another very rich and concentrated cuvée, the extract here could develop a liquorice intensity of flavour.

Drink now-2007.

<85>

Nyetimber 1995 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

Very rich fruit that is a touch oxidative, but that may be due to the pre-release sample I tasted and there is, in any case, more than enough extract to overcome this.

Drink now-2006.

<89>

Nyetimber 1996 Classic Cuvée Brut

Atypical in character, but typically great in quality, this big wine has a rich, botrytis fatness that gives it an almost New World feel. A complex cuvée that might be big, but is not heavy, due to the lovely cushiony mousse that lifts the fruit in the mouth.

Drink upon purchase.

<?>

Nyetimber 1996 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

The richness of fruit mid-palate was self-evident, but the pre-release sample was not showing well on the nose or finish, hence opinion reserved.

Wait and see.

<88>

Nyetimber 1997 Classic Cuvée Brut

Soft-silky mousse with excellent acidity, this vintage augers well for the future. Not yet available.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Nyetimber 1998 Classic Cuvée Brut

Beginning to tighten up. Obviously needs a lot more time on yeast.

Drink upon purchase.

<90>

Nyetimber 1998 Premier Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

Brilliant acidity. Such finesse. Wow!

Drink now-2010.

<89>

Nyetimber 1999 Classic Cuvée Brut

Fresh, light, fragrant aroma, with fine, beautifully focused fruit and a superb cushiony-velvety mousse providing a creamy texture on the finish. Not yet available.

Drink upon purchase.

<88>

Nyetimber 1999 Première Cuvée, Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut

Exquisite pineapple fruit, beautifully focused by lovely ripe acidity. Not yet available.

Drink upon purchase.

Oriol Rossell

Propietat Can Cassanyes

43720 Sant Marçal
Spain
Phone (977) 671061
Fax (977) 674061
<80>

Oriol Rossell NV Cava Brut Nature

Creamy-rich fruit, nice and tangy. Touch elevated, but some finesse too.
Drink now-2004.
<80>

Oriol Rossell NV Cava Brut

Excellent richness, flavour and acidity. Clean finish.
Drink upon purchase.

Orlando Wyndham

Orlando Wyndham Group
33 Exeter Terrace
Devon Park
SA 5008
Australia
Phone (8) 8208 2444
Fax (8) 8208 2403
<76>

Jacob's Creek NV Chardonnay Pinot Noir Brut Cuvée

Intense fruit for the price.
Drink now-2004.
<75>

Morris NV Sparkling Shiraz Durif

Not as elegant as some, the puckering tannins highlighting this with a certain rustic edge.
Drink upon purchase.

Oudinot

Champagne Oudinot
Château Malakoff
3 rue Malakoff
51207 Epernay
France
Phone (326) 59.50.10
Fax (326) 54.78.52

Malakoff brands include Beaumet, Jeanmaire and Oudinot. Rumours of a merger with Laurent-Perrier.
<84>

Oudinot NV Brut

Very fine mousse, clean but not amylic, with creamy fruit.
Drink now-2004.
<86>

Oudinot NV Clos Saint-Rémy Brut

Very good, rich and tasty fruit, with a very soft mousse and impressive length.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Oudinot NV Cuvée Blanc de Noirs Brut

Rich and concentrated with the barest hint of under-ripeness, indicating that it will go quite toasty.

Drink now-2005.

<82>

Oudinot NV Medium-Dry

Fresh, clean and crisp *demi-sec* with as much fruit intensity as sweetness.

Drink now-2005.

Pacific Echo

Scharffenberger Winery

8501 Highway 128

Philo

CA 95466

USA

Phone (707) 895 2065

Fax (707) 895 2758

<77>

Pacific Echo 1996 Blanc de Blancs

Precocious coffee-grinds backed up acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<75>

Pacific Echo 1997 Brut Rosé

Rich, malo influenced style that would have been better with more fruit emphasis (but not VA-lifted!).

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Pacific Echo NV Brut

Malo less obtrusive than in the last edition, with fresh, crisp fruit on the palate. Much, much better than the amylic, somewhat sweet Crémant.

Drink upon purchase.

Paillard, Bruno

Champagne Bruno Paillard

avenue du Champagne

51100 Reims

France

Phone (326) 36.20.22

Fax (326) 36.57.72

All wines carry a disgorgement date, something that other producers would do well to follow, although I doubt that few big houses if any will have the nerve.

<85>

Bruno Paillard 1990 N.P.U. Nec Plus Ultra, Brut

Ageing this wine increases the richness of fruit on the palate, but also accentuates the *barrique* aromas. As I have said before, this should have been disgorged no later than 1996, rather than 1999, as the first release was, let alone 2000 as this year's has been and the last edition's submission was. The pity is that it is so easy to see how the incredibly rich fruit could be scoring in the early to mid 90s had the wine been disgorged at the optimum time.

Drink upon purchase.

<91>

Bruno Paillard 1995 Brut

This year's disgorgement (disgorged May 2001) is so seductively rich, succulent and fruity that it jumps three percentile points over the last edition's disgorgement (disgorged June 2000) and was certainly one of the best wines at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting. If you purchased this vintage in the last edition you will find that the fruit has concentrated into an intense lemony-liquorice flavour and this will become finer and more complex the longer it is aged. Absolutely gorgeous! Amazing what happens when a super smooth mousse of ultra-fine bubbles comes into play.

Drink now-2010

<87>

Bruno Paillard NV Brut Première Cuvée

Disgorged October 2001, this blend is as consistent as all the rest. Fresh, light and elegantly stylish, with a crisp finish. Impeccable.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Bruno Paillard NV Chardonnay Réserve Privée

An elegant *blanc de blancs* that is very soft, creamy and easy to drink (disgorged September 2001).

Drink now-2004.

<86>

Bruno Paillard NV Rosé Brut Première Cuvée

Disgorged January 2002, this rosé is so fresh and elegant, with light, strawberry vacherin fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Palmer

Champagne Palmer

67 rue Jacquart

51100 Reims

France

Phone (326) 07.35.07

Fax (326) 07.45.24

<87>

Palmer 1985 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Fresh, crisp, clean and toasty, with a certain peachiness to the fruit, an elegant finish and all buoyed up a super-smooth, creaming mousse.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Palmer 1985 Blanc de Blancs Brut (*magnum*)

One of those rare examples where I have marked down the magnum of the same Champagne. Usually I mark up, sometimes I mark equally, but seldom do I mark down. The reason is that this magnum (L01458) has obviously been disgorged significantly earlier than the bottle (L01469), consequently the magnum is more toasty and has a less impressively smooth mousse, good though the wine is.

Drink now-2005.

<89>

Palmer 1992 Brut Millésime

Typically Palmer toasty-mature aromas dominating the nose, with toast-rich fruit on the palate. No wonder the houses respect this cooperative.

Drink now-2006.

<87>

Palmer 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

The rich and tasty fruit on the front and mid-palate of this wine offers immediate appeal, but although it will age nicely in the medium term, it's not a longterm bet unless you prefer the toast, not yet evident, to heavily outweigh the fruit.

Drink now-2006.

<82>

Amazone de Palmer NV Brut

My unedited note reads: 'Soggy cornflakes on the nose, 20-year-old Champagne on the palate'.

Nothing, if not un usual!

Drink upon purchase.

<82>

Palmer NV Brut

Rich, tasty and characterful fruit, with excellent acidity and going toasty, but could do with more finesse.

Drink now-2004.

Pannier

Champagne Pannier

23 rue Roger Catillon

02400 Château-Thierry

France

Phone (323) 69.13.10

Fax (323) 69.18.18

<89>

Egérie de Pannier 1996 Brut

Tasting this without dosage and not blind it is obviously superior to the pre-release sample tasted in the last edition (84 points). Much depends on the actual disgorgement.

Drink 2004-2009.

<90>

Pannier 1996 Brut

Deliciously concentrated, superb rapier-like acidity.

Drink now-2011.

<90>

Pannier 1996 Blanc de Blancs

This very tight, long, intense, crisp Champagne is a one-off blend of Avize and Le Mesnil, which offers fascinating ageing potential. However, availability is very restricted and you will probably have to visit Pannier in Château-Thierry to stand any chance of acquiring some.

Drink 2004-2013.

<89>

Egérie de Pannier 1998 Brut

Lovely concentration for year. Excellent. Pre-release sample.

Drink now-2006.

<86>

Pannier NV Brut Sélection

The 1998-based released in June 2002 was very fresh with sherbety-velvety mousse and long, crisp finish and by 2003 was going biscuity.

Drink now-2004.

Parató

Can Respall de Renardes

08733 El Pla del Penedès

Spain

Phone (93) 8988182

Fax (93) 8988510

<75>

Elias i Terns NV Cava Brut Nature

Too coconutty-oaky for any true finesse.

Drink upon purchase.

<70>

Parató NV Cava Brut Nature

Fresh, vinous, some perfumed fruit on finish.

Drink upon purchase.

Payelle

Champagne Fabrice Payelle

22 rue Saint Vincent

51150 Ambonnay

France

Phone (326) 57.02.57

Fax (326) 57.56.52

<88>

Fabrice Payelle 1995 Cuvée du Pomponne, Brut Grand Cru

Rich, fine and powerful.

Drink now-2007.

Perelada

Cavas del Castillo de Perelada

Plaza del Carmen 1

17491 Perelada

Spain

Phone (34) 972.538011

Fax (93) 2231370

<74>

Gran Claustro 2000 Cava Brut Nature

Very fresh, with amylic aromas nose and finish. Good depth on middle palate. Good acidity.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Castillo de Perelada NV Cava Brut Reserva

Fresh, fluffy and sherbety.

Drink upon purchase.

Perrier

Champagne Joseph Perrier

69 avenue de Paris

51016 Châlons-en-Champagne

France

Phone (326) 68.29.51

Fax (326) 70.57.16

<89>

Joseph Perrier 1995 Cuvée Royale Brut

The progress of this vintage is nothing short of amazing, from its excellent richness and finesse in the 2001 edition (87 points) through the 1996-like attack and intensity in the 2002 edition (also 87 points) to this year's wonderfully rich and velvety rendition.

Drink now-2011.

<?>

Joseph Perrier 1996 Cuvée Royale Brut

Although creamy-lemony-biscuity just beginning to go oxidative at WINE magazine's Champagne tasting, this wine did not show well at my blind tasting in June. Since most 1996s need more yeast contact and this has shown promise, I'll reserve my opinion for a year or two. Wait and see.

<87>

Joseph Perrier NV Cuvée Royale, Blanc de Blancs Brut

The second year that Joseph Perrier has turned out a *blanc de blancs* that is user-friendly when young.

Drink now-2005.

<89>

Joseph Perrier NV Cuvée Royale Brut

If you're lucky enough to come across any bottle marked with the EU Lot number L1282411 you will have in your possession the best example of this cuvée I have encountered in over 25 years.

The fruit is very young indeed, but this is no criticism. This cuvée is already beautiful to drink, yet has great structure and such richness that it will mature like a good vintage Champagne.

Drink now-2008.

Perrier-Jouët

Champagne Perrier-Jouët

26/28 avenue de Champagne

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 55.20.53

Fax (326) 54.54.55

<93>

Perrier-Jouët 1959 Grand Brut

If the champenois had pruned for more concentration in years like this, they would have ended up with Champagne of a fortified wine strength - if that is possible. Of course it is not possible; the yeast would die at such elevated alcohol levels, All they could do was cheat, by cutting the strength with wines from previous years that were lower in alcohol and higher in acidity (vintage Champagne is supposed to 100 per cent from the year indicated on the bottle). And they did cheat. All of them! And thank goodness because otherwise we would not any great "1959s" like this, which has all the weight, massive body and fantastically preserved richness of the vintage, but also exceptional acidity and a soft, creamy mousse.

Drink now-2020.

<91>

Perrier-Jouët 1992 Grand Brut

This Jeroboam was, I suspect, fairly recently disgorged. It had plenty of fruit supported by a very soft mousse of ultra-fine bubbles. Still very young, not even into its second stage of development, with hardly any post-disgorgement aromas.

Drink now-2011.

<91>

Perrier-Jouët 1996 Grand Brut Millésime

Great concentration of fruit, great acidity and great drinking. A great Champagne that will go creamy-biscuity with a zesty-lemony finish, but it could have been an even greater Champagne with another three years or more on yeast.

Drink now-2023.

<90>

Perrier-Jouët 1971 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Golden colour, with coconut beginning to emerge through fruit, and a very intense, almost unyielding finish that gradually gives way to toasty aromas as the wine warms in the glass (believed disgorged 1976 or 1977).

Drink now-2011.

<96>

Perrier-Jouët 1979 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Absolutely classic lean structure, with toasty aromas mellowing crisp, white peach fruit and increasing intensity on the finish (believed disgorged 1985 or 1986).

Drink now-2019.

<94>

Perrier-Jouët 1985 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Extremely elegant despite powerful toasty aromas, rich fruit, huge extract and spellbinding acidity (disgorged 1991).

Drink now-2015.

<95>

Perrier-Jouët 1990 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Exquisite fruit, very precise, well-focused and not showing seven years worth of post-disgorgement aromas (disgorged 1995).

Drink now-2020.

<92>

Perrier-Jouët 1995 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Fresh and fragrant, with crisp-biscuitiness building (disgorged 2000).

Drink now-2015.

<?>

Perrier-Jouët 1996 Cuvée Belle Epoque Brut

Although the underlying fruit and structure is impressive, the first disgorgements have aged surprisingly rapidly. Even at Belle Epoque's 100th Anniversary celebrations in Epernay in September 2002 this vintage had a questionmark hanging over it for a number of guests. What it really needs is another two or three years on yeast.

Wait and see.

<90>

Perrier-Jouët 1997 Cuvée Belle Epoque Rosé Brut

Better than the 1995, this 1997 has true vintage quality, with redcurrant Pinot Noir currently dominating the elegant fruit, but Cramant Chardonnay will eventually take over. Lovely, soft, cushiony mouse.

Drink now-2008.

<86>

Perrier-Jouët NV Blason Rosé

Fresh, light, crisp and fruity in a very elegant style, supported by excellent acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Perrier-Jouët NV Grand Brut

Fresh, flowery-fruitiness at the beginning of 2002 had become firm and fresh with lifted fruit and a lovely, crisp finish.

Drink now-2006.

Perruche

Domaine de la Perruche

29 rue de la Maumenière

49730 Montsoreau

France

Phone (241) 51.73.36

Fax (241) 38.18.70

<75>

Domaine de la Perruche NV Saumur Brut

Liquorice richness, clean.

Drink upon purchase.

Petaluma

Spring Gully Road

Piccadilly

SA 5151

Australia

Phone (8) 8339 4122

Fax (8) 8339 5253

<89>

Croser 1999 Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Very fruity, great intensity.

Drink now-2007.

<90>

Croser 1999 Petaluma

The fruit is more upfront than in previous vintages, but just as classy. Excellent length.

Drink now-2006.

Pfaffenheim

CV de Pfaffenheim

5 rue du Chai BP 33

68250 Pfaffenheim

France

Phone (389) 78.08.08

Fax (389) 49.71.65

<78>

Hartenberger NV Blanc de Blancs, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Clean fruit marked by crisp acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Philipponnat

Champagne Philipponnat

13 rue du Pont

51160 Mareuil-sur-Aÿ

France

Phone (326) 52.60.43

Fax (326) 52.61.49

<90>

Clos des Goisses 1991 Brut, Philipponnat

Creamy-liquorice bouquet with hints of toast followed by pristine, and peachy fruit on the palate.

Quite fat. Don't be fooled by a couple of slices of toast, this is a baby and only those who have not followed Clos des Goisses will consider drinking it as soon as 2004. It will be drinking beautifully, but die-hard devotees will give it at least three years and not expect anything before five. Should go creamy-peachy-exotic.

Drink 2004-2013.

<87>

Philipponnat 1993 Réserve Millésimée Brut

Concentration is exceptional for the vintage.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Philipponnat NV Royale Réserve Brut

Just as tasty as I remember from the last edition, but without the Pinot chewiness I imagined to be the new Philipponnat signature.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Philipponnat NV Cuvée 1522 Extra Brut

A lovely concentration of fruit beautifully balanced by an exquisitely crisp finish. Disgorged November 2001.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Abel Lepitre 1997 Brut Millésimé

Not quite in the class of the 1996, but slowly getting there. Great acidity underlying intense, focused fruit. Possibly has much greater ageing potential than I've indicated.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Abel Lepitre NV Cuvée No. 134, Blanc de Blancs Brut

This was a favourite of mine 20 years ago, when Abel Lepitre shared the same premises and ownership as George Goulet and De Saint Marceaux. It was never a truly great Champagne, but it was always a rather special Blanc de Blanc, much in the same way as Marie Stuart's Cuvée de la Reine (90% Chardonnay, 10% Pinot Noir) was a special Champagne. Neither Champagne was well known, yet both had a very strong, small customer base that knew these cuvées intimately. There is still something special about this Cuvée No 134, even though it is under different ownership. And I'm glad they have not touched the label, even though it looks as if it has been found in a draw of old labels that has not been opened for 50 years.

Drink now-2006.

<83>

Abel Lepitre NV Brut Rosé

Toasty yet crisp, with full fruit mid-palate.

Drink now-2004.

Pierrel

26 rue Henri Dunant

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 51.00.90

Fax (326) 51.69.40

<83>

Pierrel NV Brut Premier Cru

Apparently 100% Chardonnay, although it does not state Blanc de Blancs on the label, this Champagne has nice, clean, gentle fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<82>

Pierrel NV Cuvée Arabesque Gold, Brut

For lovers of mature, biscuity Champagne only.

Drink now-2004.

Piper-Heidsieck

Champagne Piper-Heidsieck
51 Boulevard Henri Vasnier
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 84.41.94

Fax (326) 84.43.49

<86>

Piper-Heidsieck 1995 Brut

Delicious toasty, fruit really shows through.

Drink now-2007.

<85>

Piper-Heidsieck NV Brut

The simple fruitiness of this cuvée did not grab me at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but the sample submitted (EU Lot number L1073710406) to my blind tastings was obviously from a much earlier release given its big toasty aromas and rich, nicely acid fruit on the palate.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Piper-Heidsieck NV Cuvée Spéciale Jean-Paul Gaultier, Brut

I don't normally remark on corked wines because over a period of 27 years I've probably tasted at least one corked wine from every producer I know, so why taint the notes of any specific wine when it can affect everyone. The first bottle of this had, however, the worst case of corkiness/TCA I have ever encountered. Literally the worst: bad, bad, bad! The back-up sample was absolutely fine and virtually indistinguishable from the toasty-rich Piper Brut without the basque.

Drink now-2004.

<87>

Piper-Heidsieck NV Demi-Sec

This cuvée in 2003 was full, rich and full of vanilla-sugar sweetness that it you would have sworn that the cuvée before dosage was Charles rather than Piper!

Drink now-2004.

Piper Sonoma

C/O J Winery
11447 Old Redwood Highway
Healdsburg
CA 95448
USA

Winemaker Raphael Brisbois has to work with rented equipment in the winery Piper Sonoma sold to Judy Jordan.

<79>

Piper Sonoma NV Select Cuvée, Blanc de Noir

The Piper Sonoma style has gone a tad amylic, especially in the Brut non-vintage. It's also in the Blanc de Noir [sic], but not as evident and the fruit underneath is richer. Really quite good richer, with excellent acidity, some finesse and a nice cushiony mousse in support

Drink upon purchase.

Pipers Brook

1216 Pipers Brook Road

Pipers Brook

Tas. 7254

Australia

Phone (3) 6332 4444

Fax (3) 6382 7226

Founder Andrew Pirie was kicked out in February 2003 by Belgian owned Kreglinger group, who purchased Pipers Brook in 2002.

<88>

Pirie 1995 Pipers Brook

Four years after being disgorged in September 1998, the malo dominates a tad too much on the nose. In the Australian cellared version, the fruit is becoming exaggerated, showing some VA and losing the incredible finesse and elegance its once had. However, in the UK cellared version (well, the Stevenson cellared one at least), there is no exaggeration of the fruit, no noticeable VA and the level of finesse is almost as it was at this wine's peak. The latter would score 90 points, but although the Australian cellared version now scores only 88 points, that is a great rating in itself and should in no way devalue the 91 points this wine originally scored. All wines decline. Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Pirie 1996 Pipers Brook

By January 2002, the UK stock of this wine had started to develop a malty character and this was evident at both the Australia Day Tasting and the centralised ANZ tasting. I asked for other disgorgements to be flown over and I have to say that I much preferred it to the UK stock. Perhaps this vintage is simply going through a phase. After all, we know as little about how it ages as we knew about Clos du Mesnil when that was first released and both Henri Krug and I wrote off the 1979 vintage when became so blowzy it was vulgar. However, after that very low point in its evolution the 1979 peaked at an even higher quality than before and it still amazes me (and Henri), so who knows what the future holds for Pirie 1996 (or 1995 for that matter)?

Drink upon purchase.

<86>

Pirie 1997 Pipers Brook

This is an excellent sparkling wine with plenty of exotic fruity richness initially, but this dries out a bit on the palate and it does not have the class of either the original 1995 vintage or the 1996. Great Champagnes have been through much worse wilderness years than this, so I might be unjustly hard in my rating, but this is an annual buyer's guide and I must score as the wine shows.

Drink upon purchase.

Pol Roger

Champagne White Foil

1 rue Henri Lelarge

51206 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 59.58.00

Fax (326) 55.25.70

<97>

Pol Roger 1979 Brut Vintage (*Jeroboam*)

It was a mistake to serve this 1979 after the toasty-mellow 1985 because it was disgorged seven years later (December 1998) and had hardly evolved in the meantime, needing at least another three years, but the intrinsic quality and potential for development was in no doubt. This is probably the most perfectly balanced Pol Roger vintage of my lifetime.

Drink 2005-2025

<96>

Pol Roger 1985 Brut Vintage (*Jeroboam*)

Disgorged in December 1991, which explains the huge toasty aroma, but it has such intensity of fruit that it can easily take such toastiness. A beautiful wine.

Drink now-2015.

<85>

Pol Roger 1988 Brut Vintage

Disgorged in September 1997, this vintage has developed far differently than the same vintage in my cellar (I once dubbed Pol Roger's 1988 as "the Stevenson's house wine"), having an extraordinarily exotic Lily of the Valley aroma pervading its fruit. The only other Lily of the Valley I have encountered in wine has been in New World Gewurztraminer, and it is usually attributed to a terpenoid alcohol called linalool. Where on earth it comes from in a Champagne, I have no idea. The score is for interest: I much prefer what remains of my own-cellared 1988 (91 points).

Drink upon purchase.

<?>

Pol Roger 1989 Brut Vintage

Disgorged March 2001, with a promisingly pale colour for the vintage and a lovely creamy-soft mousse, but spoiled by murky aromas on the nose.

Drink upon purchase.

<95>

Pol Roger 1990 Brut Vintage

I was glad to have the opportunity of tasting this great vintage direct from PR's cellar, as some UK cellared bottles have matured unexpectedly rapidly, developing in the worst cases mercaptan-like boiled cabbage aromas. I would have preferred tasting the original disgorgement, rather than a relatively recent one (March 1999), but I could not complain about the quality of this rich, creamy-biscuity Champagne, with its beautifully focused fruit on the palate and fresh, creamy-citrusy finish. A masterpiece!

Drink now-2030.

<85>

Pol Roger 1993 Brut Vintage

An October 2001 disgorgement tasted at PR in October 2002 was going almondy and obviously at its peak for that particular disgorgement.

Drink upon purchase.

<91>

Pol Roger 1995 Brut Vintage

A November 2001 disgorgement tasted at PR in October 2002 was exceedingly fresh, stylish and harmonious, showing great finesse. The UK shipment at the same time was more developed, with a chewiness of Pinot giving way to concentrated Chardonnay fruit, while the additionally

yeast-complexed fruit was luscious, with even greater finesse. My only concern has been a of sulphur spoiling the nose at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting (where it would have scored 89 points), but this had blown away by June.

Drink now-2014.

<97>

Pol Roger 1996 Brut Vintage

The perfect expression of potentially great complexity.

Drink 2005-2035

<90>

Pol Roger 1993 Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill Brut

Fresh, beguiling bouquet with slow-building toasty aromas coming out after a few minutes in the glass. Elegant fruit on the palate. Low-pressure mousse of the most minuscule pincushion bubbles.

Drink now-2010.

<91>

Pol Roger 1995 Brut Rosé

Absolutely delicious, with Pinot fruit flavours deepening over the last edition and the acidity bedding for a longer life at this level than I had initially imagined.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Pol Roger 1995 Brut Chardonnay

This must have had subliminal TCA at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting because although there was no obvious sign of a fault, its very pedestrian character and lack of any buzz could not have been further from the luscious quality this vintage of Brut Chardonnay as I have always known it to be. Tasted several times since and extremely happy with its condition on each occasion: absolutely fresh with oodles of creamy fruit.

Drink now-2006.

<95>

Pol Roger 1996 Brut Rosé

The last edition's re-release sample notched up 94 points, while this year's crept up one percentile point, which is hard to do at this level of scoring. A stunningly vivacious rosé.

Drink now-2006.

<92>

Pol Roger 1996 Brut Chardonnay

Must have over scored this in the last edition (93 points)! Seriously, tasting pre-release samples blind at this level, from two disgorgements one year apart and only one percentile point difference is a huge testament to this Champagne's intrinsic quality. Intensely and exquisitely rich, with a satisfying peach and vanilla fruitiness underlying great acidity. Will go toasty. This wine was due to be released in 2003, but it is now more likely to be 2004, so I have had a pre-pre-pre release and a pre-pre-release. I look forward to next year's pre-release!

Drink now-2010.

<87>

Pol Roger NV Brut White Foil

This was stylishly fruity at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting. The best release I can remember, although the deliciously creamy cuvée at the 2003 Annual Champagne Tasting would give it a good run for its money. Pol's non-vintage is definitely on a roll.

Drink now-2006.

<87>

Pol Roger NV Rich Special Demi-Sec

Some lovely old reserve wine in this cuvée gives it a barley-sugar sweetness, but there is a youthful element that will benefit from a year or so to integrate. Clean, elegant and linear in its focus. Excellent.

Drink now-2008.

Pommery

Champagne Pommery

5 Place du Général Gouraud

51053 Reims

France

Phone (326) 61.62.63

Fax (326) 61.62.99

<90>

Pommery 1989 Louise, Brut

Very fresh, delicate and floral on the nose and palate. Do not over-chill.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Pommery 1992 Louise Rosé, Brut

This was so fresh that it was almost green at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, but the sample submitted to my own blind tastings (Lot number LK7447) was nicely mellowed by toasty aromas. Gone are the floral aromas noted in the last edition, but the finesse is still there, as is the soft, cushiony mousse, which serves to enhance that finesse.

Drink now-2004.

<87>

Pommery 1992 Brut Grand Cru

Although this release shows the beginning of a slow decline on the previous two years (both 88 points), it has more to do with disgorgement windows than intrinsic quality, since well-cellared examples of the previous two samples have gained in both finesse and complexity, as well as having a much smoother mousse (89 points and rising). This release will also improve, albeit not quite to the same level.

Drink now-2008.

<90>

Pommery 1995 Cuvée Louise, Brut

Super-smooth fruit and mousse with oodles of undeveloped extract waiting to be released.

Drink now-2013.

<85>

Pommery 1995 Brut Grand Cru

Not the finesse shown in the last edition, but almost certainly a different disgorgement and most probably will gain finesse with bottle-age.

Drink now-2007.

<90>

Pommery 1996 Cuvée Louise Rosé, Brut

It's very pale apricot colour belies the depth and intensity of this wine, which is so atypically strong for Pommery that it is more Louis than Louise. A great bottle nonetheless.

Drink 2004-2009.

<87>

Pommery NV Brut Rosé

Hardly any colour, but packed with crisp fruit and lovely fresh finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<85>

Pommery NV Brut Royal

Pommery's famed freshness and liveliness is immediately evident on the nose, but the palate is far richer and more concentrated than regular consumers of Brut Royal will be used to. However, other Champagne drinkers might well find this preferable.

Drink now-2005.

Pouillon

Champagne Roger Pouillon

3 Rue de la Couple

51160 Mareuil-sur-Aÿ

France

Fax (326) 59.49.83

Fabrice Pouillon speaks some of the best theory when it comes to the restrained use of oak *barriques* for Champagne, but is one of the biggest culprits when it comes to over-oaking.

However, he is very young and these wines take years to come to fruition, so perhaps we can look forward to some stunning future releases?

<84>

Roger Pouillon NV Fleur de Mareuil

Very oaky!

Drink now

Primo Estate

Old Port Wakefield Road

Virginia

SA 5120

Australia

Phone (8) 8380 9442

Fax (8) 8380 9696

<87>

Primo Estate 2001 Joseph Sparkling Red

Simply this wine has more finesse than most Aussie sparkling reds. Fruit-driven with a creamy finish.

Drink now-2004.

Putille

Château de Putille

49620 La Pommeraye

France

Phone (241) 39.02.91

Fax (241) 39.03.45

<76>

Château de Putille NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Estery, would have benefited from another 6-9 months on yeast, but might develop well for same period of post-disgorgement ageing.

Drink upon purchase.

Quartz Reef

Lake Dunstan

Estate Building 6

McNulty Road

Cromwell

New Zealand

Phone (3) 4453084

Fax (3) 4453086

<80>

Chauvet NV Brut

Fruity guzzler.

Drink now-2004.

Ratzenberger

Weingut Ratzenberger

Blücherstrasse 167

55422 Bacharach Steeg

Phone (6743) 1337

Fax (6743) 2842

<76>

Weingut Ratzenberger 1998 Bacharacher Kloster Fürstental Riesling Brut

Fresh, crisp Riesling fruit and a fluffy mousse. Fresher than and much preferred to the 1999.

Drink upon purchase.

Raventós i Blanc

Plaça del Roure s/n

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 8183262

Fax (93) 8912500

<75>

Raventós i Blanc 1998 Cava Brut

Serious biscuity style, but lacks finesse.

Drink upon purchase.

Raventós Rosell

Campanar 6

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 7725251

Fax (93) 7727191

<77>

Gradiva NV Cava Brut Nature

Very fruity, some depth ... could develop, but no guarantees!

Drink now-2005.

Rebholz

Weingut Ökonomierat Rebholz

Weinstrasse 54

76833 Siebeldingen

Germany

Phone (6345) 3439

Fax (6345) 7954

<82>

Weingut Ökonomierat Rebholz 1997 Spätburgunder Brut

Fine, barrique-style Pinot Sekt. Received the highest score to this point in the tasting, but I'm not an oak fan and other Sekte scoring just 80 points were preferable. Scored per style.

Drink upon purchase.

Reinhartshausen

Schloss Reinhartshausen

Hauptstrasse 41

65346 Eltville-Erbach

Germany

Phone (6123) 676333

Fax (6123) 4222

<78>

Schloss Reinhartshausen, Prinz von Preussen 1998 Erbacher Rheinhell Chardonnay Brut

Fresh, clean and really quite intense fruit.

Drink now-2005.

Ridgeview Estate

Fragbarrow Lane

Ditchling Common

Sussex

BN6 8TP

Great Britain

Phone (1444) 258039

Fax (1444) 230757

<88>

Bloomsbury 1997 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate

This cuvée was on brilliant form at the Waitrose Spring Tasting, when its fresh, biscuity complexity underscored by crisp, bracing acidity knocked (an admittedly under-performing)

Nyetimber 1994 Blanc de Blancs into a cocked hat. And the last edition's disgorgement tasted one year on was even better.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Cavendish 1998 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate

The pepperiness detected in the last edition (the first ever in any Ridgeview) is far more subdued, particularly on the nose where some malty notes are singing through. Magnificent richness, but unless this wine does something unexpected, it is I believe at its best now, rather than 2002-2004 as indicated in the last edition. Sorry folks, but this is not an exact science, especially when it comes to the product of new ventures such as Ridgeview.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Knightsbridge 1999 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate

Due to be released early 2003 and might well improve with a little extra time on yeast, yet it is also absolutely right for drinking now. Very rich fruit, lovely acids, potentially complex. I envisage this developing a vanilla-infused, silky-smooth finish.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

South Ridge 1999 Cuvée Merret Brut, Ridgeview Estate

There is the same minuscule touch of pepperiness here (on the aftertaste) as I found in Ridgeview's Cavendish 1998 in the last edition, but the fruit is intense, the acidity stunning and the structure just perfect. The length is impressive.

Drink now-2004.

Rieflé

Domaine Joseph Rieflé

11 place de la mairie

68250 Pfaffenheim

France

Phone (389) 49.50.98

Fax (389) 40.50.98

<75>

Rieflé NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Lifted pineapple fruit for immediate drinking.

Drink upon purchase.

Robert, Bertrand

Champagne Bertrand Robert

3 rue du Point du Jour

51140 Trigny

Phone (326) 03.11.47

Fax (326) 03.02.49

<?>

Bertrand Robert 1996 Cuvée Seduction, Brut

Bit hard and harsh, yet shows potential. Needs more time on yeast.

Wait and see.

Roederer Louis

Champagne Louis Roederer
21 Boulevard Lundy
51053 Reims
France

Phone (326) 40.42.11

Fax (326) 47.66.51

<90>

Louis Roederer 1994 Brut Vintage

Totally different from either in the last edition's sample or the year before (both of which scored a paltry 82 points), this particular bottle had a lovely voluminous aroma, intense fruit on the palate and such a long finish that I would never have guessed its vintage under blind conditions. Fact is it was tasted under blind conditions. At WINE Magazine (published in February 2002), so I cannot be sure it was the 1994 it claimed to be on the crib sheet. What makes me doubt it further is that the Bruno Paillard 1996 on the crib was 1995 (more likely) in the magazine. Even more curious, this Roederer, whatever its vintage, was noticeable by its absence in the magazine and there was no reason why a Champagne of this quality should miss the cut.

Drink now-2009.

<92>

Louis Roederer 1995 Cristal Brut Rosé

You might be forgiven for dismissing this on the nose, not for any negative reasons, simply the 'So what?' factor, as there is nothing - yet - that even hints what a glorious mouthful of fruit and finesse you are about to encounter. It has great acidity and a superb cushiony mousse. Why is it 'So what?' on the nose? Simply because it is Cristal. Both the Brut and Rosé Cristal are like that - not seemingly special - for the first few years of their life, then the finesse soars for what is a relatively short while before it levels out for five years or so. It's not one of Champagne's longest lived cuvées. Only the 1974 Cristal Rosé has soared for as long as 20 years or more. But that's part of Cristal's charm and the reason why it should be consumed at its peak.

Drink now-2007.

<90>

Louis Roederer 1995 Cristal Brut

The same potential complexity as in the last edition, but a different disgorgement results in less immediate finesse. Keep for at least one year.

Drink 2004-2009.

<86>

Louis Roederer 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Rich and tasty without any of the Chablis-like character found in the 1995, although both vintages are destined to tread the same toasty trek.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Louis Roederer 1996 Brut Vintage

Roederer's creamy-biscuity richness was obvious at both *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting and my own blind tastings, but until it gets more bottle-maturity it will need to be opened an hour or so and served not to chilled.

Drink now-2009.

<91>

Louis Roederer NV Brut Premier (*magnum*)

Glorious, but keep well-cellared for two years if you want to really appreciate this in magnum. Drink 2005-2009.

<87>

Louis Roederer NV Rich Sec

Intense fruit, nectarines again. Definitely will improve with a year or two perfect cellarage. Drink now-2007.

<90>

Louis Roederer NV Brut Premier

Back on world-beating form after two years when this cuvée lacked bottle-age, particularly on the landed side, although its intrinsic quality remained high. This year's release is as seductively rich as it has ever been, with elegant, violet-vanilla tinged fruit that is well into its creamy stage and just beginning to pick up its biscuitiness. The last edition's release in France (no EU Lot number!) had lost its Chablis-like character and deepened in flavour, but its bracing fresh fruit still has not developed any Roederer biscuitiness. A good quality Champagne (85 points), but not the class expected from this cuvée at its best.

Drink now-2007.

Roederer Estate

4501 Highway 128

Philo

CA 95466

USA

Phone (707) 895 2288

Fax (707) 895 2120

<85>

Roederer Estate NV Brut

The next blend is the 1999-based cuvée, which has exquisite fruit, a beautiful, smooth, cushiony mousse and is already very accessible.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

Roederer Estate NV Brut Rosé

This is extraordinarily good by non-Champagne standards, but to be constructively critical, the current 1998-based cuvée has a malo softness that threatens to go oxidative, whereas the next (1999-based) blend is a tad VA-lifted.

Drink upon purchase.

<90>

L'Ermitage 1996 Brut, Roederer Estate

The rich, tangy fruit in this vintage is deeply flavoured and slowly evolving, with the potential for profound complexity.

Drink now-2007.

<?>

L'Ermitage 1997 Brut, Roederer Estate

This vintage has a leaner, greener, earlier-picked character, with startling acidity, which would make me wary, but for the fact that the earliest wines from Roederer Estate were all castigated

for being too green, yet turned out to be world beaters after 2-3 years bottle-age. Given this track-record, prudence is the best policy.
Wait and see.

Rosemount Estate

Rosemount Road
Denman
NSW 2328
Australia
Phone (6547) 2467
Fax (6547) 2742
<75>

Rosemount NV V Sparkling Chardonnay

Nice and creamy with good acidity and a fine mousse, but a touch amylic on finish and something lacking in expression and finesse.
Drink now-2004.

Royer

Champagne Royer Père
120 Grande Rue
10110 Landreville
France
Phone (325) 38.52.16
Fax (325) 29.92.26
<85>

Royer 1996 Brut

Fresh, sherbety, ready to drink.
Drink now-2006.
<82>

Royer NV Cuvée de Réserve

Perfumed fruit with a touch of tannin on the finish.
Drink upon purchase.

Ruhmann

Gilbert Ruhmann Fils
31 rue de l'Ortenbourg
67750 Scherwiller
France
Phone (388) 92.03.21
Fax (388) 82.30.19
<76>

Ruhmann NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Another fresh, clean, crisp 2000-based Crémant d'Alsace cuvée.
Drink upon purchase.

Ruinart

Champagne Ruinart
4 rue des Crayères
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 85.40.29

Fax (326) 82.88.43

<?>

Dom Ruinart 1988 Rosé

Opinion reserved because of its toasty tendency and a lack of focus on the normally very focused fruit. Possibly a developmental stage. Hopefully, anyway!

Wait and see.

<95>

Dom Ruinart 1993 Blanc de Blancs

Wow, wow, wow! Stuff Ruinart's non-vintage *blanc de blancs*, which was new in the last edition and I have tasted many times, but has never been clean (I was hoping for a different blend this year, but it's obvious just a different release of the same one - hopefully they will shift it and move on!), this 1993 Dom was a brilliant 90 points in the last edition, but the sample submitted this year has shot up and over the stunning 1990 (93 points) that I must taste these two vintages side by side over several disgorgements next time I visit. Absolutely fabulously rich lemony-rich fruit. It's like great Corton Charlemagne with bubbles.

Drink now-2013.

<90>

R de Ruinart 1995 Brut

Unlike the last edition, this did show very well at the Annual Champagne Tasting and it shone at my own blind tastings three months later in both years. This vintage gains a percentile point over the last edition because its fruit did not go toasty as has been infused with vanilla-richness, and I rather like it this way.

Drink now-2008.

<88>

R de Ruinart NV Brut

Great concentration carried off with elegance, although the latter will gradually be traded off for toastiness, making when best to drink this Champagne a very personal choice.

Drink now-2007.

<87>

Ruinart NV Brut Rosé

In 2002, this was so fresh and floral (85 points), but in 2003 the 1997-based release was much richer, with intense summer fruit pudding flavour.

Drink now-2007.

Rumball

Rumball Sparkling Wines
35 Charles Street
Norwood
SA 5067
Australia
Phone (8) 8332 2761

Fax (8) 8364 0188

<80>

Rumball NV Sparkling Merlot

The creamy-oak nose will be every cent and dime paid for this wine if you are a lover of 4x2.

Drink now-2005.

<75>

Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz

Fresh red fruits, quite sweet and fruit driven.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Rumball NV Sparkling Shiraz Special Cuvée

Rich, tasty and not too sweet, far better than the basic Sparkling Shiraz.

Drink now-2004.

Saarstein

Weingut Schloss Saarstein

54455 Serrig

Germany

Phone (6581) 2324

Fax (6581) 6523

<73>

Weingut Schloss Saarstein 1997 Riesling Trocken

Soft, easy-going.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Weingut Schloss Saarstein 1998 Riesling Brut

Crisp Riesling fruit with the possibility of ageing.

Drink now-2005.

Salon

Champagne Salon

Le Mesnil-sur-Oger

51190 Avize

France

Phone (326) 57.51.65

Fax (326) 57.79.29

<87>

Salon 1990 Blanc de Blancs Brut

The last edition's pepperiness, which had not been present in any of the earlier pre-releases, is still present in the same disgorgement one year on, although it is less intrusive. Both of the samples submitted this year are less peppery, but quite oxidative. If this vintage is true Salon quality (and let's face it, 1990 should be!) and if it eventually achieves the sort of super-Salon standard the pre-release samples prior to the last edition promised, then the score here is ludicrously low, but my blind tasting score must be sacrosanct in an annual guide.

Drink 2005-2017.

<98>

Salon 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

The best Salon since 1982.
Drink 2004-2025.

Saumur, CV de

CV de Saumur
Route de Saumoussay
49260 Saint-Cyr-en-Bourg
France

Phone (241) 53.06.08

Fax (241) 51.69.13

<74>

CV de Saumur, Crémant de Loire 1999 Cuvée de la Chevalerie, Brut Rosé

Fresh, perfumed, light and easy.
Drink upon purchase.

<78>

CV de Saumur NV Cuvée de la Chevalerie, Crémant de Loire Brut

Fresh and fluffy, plenty of fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

<72>

CV de Saumur NV Cuvée Habit Pourpre, Rouge Demi-Sec

Fruit-driven, sweet with some tannin on the finish.
Drink upon purchase.

Schaeffer-Woerly

3 Place du Marché
67650 Dambach-la-ville
France

Phone (388) 92.40.81

Fax (388) 92.49.87

<76>

Schaeffer-Woerly 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut

This has far more finesse than Schaeffer's 1999 Riesling, and well deserves the silver medal it won at Colmar.
Drink upon purchase.

Schaller

Edgard Schaller et Fils
1 rue du Château
68630 Mittelwihr
France

Phone (389) 47.90.28

Fax (389) 49.02.66

<76>

Schaller NV Blanc de Noir, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

It is as if Schaller was trying to emulate Bollinger with this creamy-nutty oxidative styled fizz.

Drink upon purchase.

Schramsberg

1400 Schramsberg Road

Calistoga

CA 94515

USA

Phone (707) 942 2414

Fax (707) 942 5943

<80>

Schramsberg 1996 J. Schram

Extraordinary richness on the palate, but let down on the nose.

Drink upon purchase.

<81>

Schramsberg 1998 Blanc de Blancs

Big, creamy-rich fruit that promises to develop creamy-brazilnut complexity. Big, creamy aftertaste.

Drink now-2004.

<79>

Schramsberg 1998 Blanc de Noirs

A tendency to go oxidative reduced this wine's score.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Schramsberg 1999 Crémant Demi-Sec

Stewed rhubarb fruit, rich, with brulée sweetness on the finish. Almost fat.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Schramsberg 1999 Brut Rosé

Creamy-rich, malo-influenced, red fruits.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Mirabelle NV Brut, Schramsberg

I don't know whether sales have dropped off, but this used to be fresh, light, easy drinking and the sample submitted this year is much rich, more serious drinking with impressive depth and complexity. If sales have declined, the extra bottle-age has achieved a miraculous change and hopefully this will attract new buyers!

Drink upon purchase.

Schwach

Bernard Schwach

25 route de Ste Marie aux Mines

68150 Ribeauvillé

France

Phone (389) 73.72.18

Fax (389) 73.30.34

<77>

François Schwach NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Lovely, fresh, cool fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

Seaview

Edwards & Chaffey Winery
Chaffeys Road
McLaren Vale
SA 5171
Australia

Phone (8) 8323 8250

Fax (8) 8323 9308

<78>

Seaview 1994 Section 353 Pinot Chardonnay

Biscuity.
Drink upon purchase.

<77>

Seaview 1998 Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs

Very fresh, solid fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Seaview 1999 Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs, Vintage Reserve Brut

Creamy-biscuity rich.
Drink now-2005.

Segura Viudas

Segura Viudas SA (Grupo Freixenet)
Sant Antoni 11
08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia
Spain

Phone (93) 8997227

Fax (93) 8996006

<78>

Segura Viudas NV Cava Gran Brut

Light, fresh and sherbety with creamy-sweet mousse.
Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Torre Galimany NV Cava Brut Nature

Rich, smooth and tasty, but not as impressive as reviewed in the last edition.
Drink upon purchase.

Selosse

Champagne Jacques Selosse
22 rue Ernest Vallée
51190 Avize
France

Phone (326) 57.53.56

Fax (326) 57.78.22

<90>

Jacques Selosse NV Brut Tradition, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

Neither this year's nor the last edition's submission survived my blind tastings because of raw, estery, oak aromas, but the last edition's Brut Tradition (the back label of which states that it was disgorged 04/07/2000) was deliciously fresh and clean with intense, crisp fruit 12 months later. However, I have been experimenting with the effect of post-disgorgement ageing on all Selosse cuvées for five years and this was an exception. In most cases, the raw, estery oak does not magically disappear and in a number of instances the wines darken and oxidise quite rapidly. Drink now-2008.

Seppelt

Seppelt Great Western

Moyston Road

Great Western

Vic. 3377

Australia

Phone (3) 5361 2222

Fax (3) 5361 2200

<80>

Seppelt 1996 Sparkling Shiraz

Not so sweet and real red wine qualities.

Drink now-2005.

Sieur d'Arques

Avenue du Mauzac

11303 Limoux

France

Phone (468) 74.63.00

Fax (468) 74.63.13

The daughter of Thierry Gasco, Pommery's winemaker, is one of the winemakers here.

<83>

Aimery, La Méthode Ancestrale NV Suave et Fruité, Tête de Cuvée

Apple purée!

Drink upon purchase.

Sipp

Louis Sipp

5 Grand'Rue

68150 Ribeauvillé

France

Phone (389) 73.60.01

Fax (389) 73.31.46

<76>

Louis Sipp 1999 Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Crisp, clean fruit, with good acidity and length.
Drink upon purchase.

Sipp Mack

Domaine Sipp Mack
1 rue des Vosges
68150 Hunawihr
France

Phone (389) 73.61.88

Fax (389) 73.36.70

<77>

Sipp Mack NV Crémant d'Alsace

The 1999-based blend of this cuvée has an impressively smooth mousse supporting crisp almondy fruit with good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Smith

Samuel Smith & Son
Yalumba Winery
Eden Valley Road
Angaston
SA 5353
Australia

Phone (8) 8561 3200

Fax (8) 8561 3393

<85>

Jansz of Tasmania 1996 Pipers River Cuvée Brut

So toasty-rich it's almost blowsy, but is saved by excellent high acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Jansz of Tasmania 1996

Nice fruit and softness on finish, with toasty-rich aftertaste.

Drink upon purchase.

<88>

Yalumba 1996 D Black, Sparkling Cabernet Shiraz

The Cabernet adds menthol finesse to the rich, sweet creamy Shiraz fruit.

Drink now-2004.

<80>

Yalumba 1997 D Brut

Good richness.

Drink upon purchase.

<79>

Jansz of Tasmania NV

Crisp, clean, firm, tight fruit, while a few months earlier in Australia it was biscuity rich with some hazelnut complexity. Presumably the latter was the end of one blend, the former the beginning of another.

Drink now-2004.

Soljans

Soljans Wines
263 Lincoln Road
Henderson
New Zealand
Phone (6) 438 8365
Fax (6) 438 8366
<80>

Soljans Estate 1998 Legacy Brut

Good fruit, not as VA-lifted as previous vintages.
Drink now-2004.
<75>

Fusion NV Hawkes Bay

Demi-sec style, Asti impersonation, but with more boiled sweet fruit than fresh orange flower.
Drink upon purchase.

Solter

Helmut Solter
Zum Niederwald Denkmal 2
65385 Rudesheim-am-Rhein
Germany
Phone (6722) 2566
<90>

Solter 1988 Rheingau Riesling Brut

Heavenly, ripe, peachy, bottle-mature Riesling of great elegance and freshness.
Drink upon purchase.
<82>

Solter NV Rheingau Riesling Brut

This delightfully fresh Sekt has a nice hint of bottle-mature Riesling and would have scored even higher if it had higher acidity.
Drink upon purchase.

Sonnenhof

Weingut Sonnenhof
Lange Strasse 38
65366 Geisenheim
Germany
Phone (6722) 6343
Fax (6722) 75451
<75>

Weingut Sonnenhof, Bezner-Fischer 2000 Spätburgunder Brut Rosé

Good, sweet Pinot fruit.
Drink upon purchase.

Sonop

PO Box 1142
Stellenbosch 7599
South Africa
Phone (21) 887 2409
Fax (21) 886 4838
<77>

Tribal NV South African Sparkling Wine

This did not get a mention in the last edition because of its amylic aromas and simplistic fruit, but although once again amylic the fruit is anything but simplistic. It's really quite rich, soft, exotic and, as it claims on the label, lingering. Mind you, much of the lingering is down to a sweet, luscious dosage that tastes like upper-level demi-sec!
Drink upon purchase.

Sparviere

Lo Sparviere
Gusalli Beretta di Poncelet M.
Via Costa
2 - 25040 Monticelli Brusati
Italy
Phone (30) 652382
Fax (30) 652382
<79>

Lo Sparviere NV Franciacorta Extra Brut

Bags of rich fruit, with a peachy tang mid-palate.
Drink now-2004.

Starvedog Lane

18701 Gehricke Road
PO Box 326
Hahndorf
SA 5245
Australia
Phone (8) 8388 1250
Fax (8) 8388 7233
<80>

Starvedog Lane 1998 Sparkling Chardonnay Pinot Noir Pinot Meunier

When first shipped this was quite young and raw, but soon developed into a lovely big mouthful of fruit with toasty potential, although it would have been even better with more time on lees.
Drink now-2005.

Stempfel

4 rue principale
68420 Obermorschwihr
France

Phone (389) 49.31.95

Fax (389) 49.26.88

<75>

Stempfel NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

The 1999-based cuvée is well structured classic brut fizz with a good dash of Muscat.
Drink upon purchase.

Stoffel

Antoine Stoffel
21 rue de Colmar
68420 Eguisheim
France

Phone (389) 41.32.03

Fax (389) 24.92.07

<79>

Stoffel NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A very fruity fizz that will go toasty.
Drink upon purchase.

Taittinger

Champagne Taittinger
9 Place Saint-Nicaise
51061 Reims
France

Phone (326) 85.45.35

Fax (326) 85.84.65

Taittinger and its subsidiaries (including Bouvet-Ladubay, the Envergure and Concorde hotel groups, Baccarat crystal-ware and Annick Goutal perfumes) are now jointly owned by Compagnie Nationale à Portefeuille, a financial holding company controlled by the Belgian baron Albert Frère, and by the Taittinger family, who were previously the sole owners. Albert Frère also happens to be on the board of LVMH!

<89>

Taittinger 1995 Brut Millésimé

Good ready-to-drink vintage fizz.
Drink upon purchase.

<95>

Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 1995 Blanc de Blancs Brut

Previous disgorgements were ready to drink immediately, but this year's release requires at least one year's extra cellaring. Lovely creamy fruit. Pure class.
Drink now-2010.

<90>

Taittinger 1996 Brut Millésime

Rich, sherbety fruit supported by a fluffy, breezy mousse.
Drink now-2009.

<89>

Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 1996 Rosé Brut

Although high-scoring, this vintage is three points down on the last edition (92 points) and I should really reserve my opinion, not least because both were pre-release samples. The forwardness remarked in the last edition has evolved into delicate toasty aromas this year, but floral-Pinot aromas are building and could overwhelm the toastiness, so it could well get younger before it gets older. The fruit, which was so deep and intense in the last edition, has almost disappeared and what remains is a tight ball on the finish. With such contradictory evolution, anything could happen!

Drink now-2006.

<81>

Taittinger NV Brut Réserve

This was solid stuff with a sweet finish at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, rather than Taittinger at its elegant best and exactly the same at my own blind tastings later in the year.

Drink upon purchase.

Tarlant

Champagne Tarlant

51480 Oeuilly

France

Phone (326) 58.30.60

Fax (326) 58.37.31

<87>

Tarlant 1995 Brut

Frothy-fruity with finesse.

Drink now-2006.

<85>

Tarlant NV Brut Réserve

Fresh, crisp, and clean with excellent acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Tarlant NV Pinot Meunier

An innovative *barrique*-fermented Meunier of excellent richness.

Drink now-2005.

<85>

Tarlant NV Cuvée Louis

This *barrique*-fermented Champagne is rich and tasty with noticeable oak, but it's not too blatant and the finish is dominated by freshness, not oak.

Drink now-2005.

Tatachilla

151 Main Road

McLaren Vale

SA 5171

Australia

Phone (8) 8323 8656

Fax (8) 8323 9096

<80>

Tatachilla NV Sparkling Malbec

Oxidatively-creamy-rich cherries and plums.
Drink now-2004.

Telmont

Champagne J. de Telmont
1 avenue de Champagne
51480 Damery
France

Phone (326) 58.40.33

Fax (326) 58.63.93

<85>

J. de Telmont 1995 Cuvée Grand Couronnement, Blanc de Blancs Brut

The immediate appeal of rich, tasty fruit gives way to a hint of pepperiness, followed by increased flavour, hinting at a biscuity rather than toasty destiny.

Drink now-2006.

<82>

J. de Telmont NV Grande Réserve Brut

Good fruit, if somewhat simple and straightforward.

Drink upon purchase.

Test Valley Vineyard

Fonthill Glebe Wines
The Winery
Teffont Magna
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5RG
Great Britain

Phone (1722) 716770

Fax (1722) 716698

<71>

Test Valley Vineyard NV Seyval Blanc, Premium Reserve Brut

Sweet and sour, green and creamy fruit, which tastes better than it sounds.

Drink upon purchase.

Thienot

Champagne Alain Thienot
14 rue des Moissons
51100 Reims
France

Phone (326) 77.50.10

Fax (326) 77.50.19

<85>

Alain Thienot 1995 Brut Millésimé

Perfumed fruit, but needs some aging to bring finesse.

Drink 2004-2007.

<85>

Alain Thienot 1995 Grande Cuvée, Brut

Not much to choose between this and Thienot's Brut at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, where both scored 84 points, but this was on stunning form at *Decanter* magazine's 1995/1996 Champagne tasting, where its mature, deliciously smooth, violet-vanilla fruit utterly beguiled this taster at least (90 points). The sample submitted to my blind tasting was closer to the *Decanter* version. Different disgorgements?

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Alain Thienot 1995 Cuvée Stanislas, Blanc de Blancs Brut

Succulent, rich fruit, velvety. Seems to rise above its class deluxe cuvée of small grower perhaps?

Drink now-2008.

<85>

Alain Thienot 1996 Brut Rosé

Very intense fruit, needs time.

Drink 2004-2007.

<83>

Alain Thienot NV Brut

Thienot Brut seemed to be the pouring Champagne everywhere I went in London this year. It served this purpose well enough and was of a similar quality at the Annual Champagne.

Drink upon purchase.

Torre Oria

Ctra. Pontón-Utiel

46390 Derramador-Requena

Spain

Phone (96) 2320289

Fax (96) 2320311

<75>

Torre Oria 1998 Cava Brut Nature

Very fruity entry level Cava.

Drink upon purchase.

Torreblanca

Finca Masía Torreblanca s/n

08734 Sant Miquel d'Olerdola

Spain

Phone (93) 8915066

Fax (93) 8900102

<77>

Masblanc NV Cava Extra Brut

Elevated fruit. Great ready drinking, but don't keep.

Drink upon purchase.

Torelló

Augusti Torelló SA
La Serra s/n
08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia
Spain

Phone (93) 8911173

Fax (93) 8912616

<78>

Kripta Gran Reserva 1997 Cava Brut Nature

Best yet!

Drink upon purchase.

Tribaut, G.

Champagne G. Tribaut
88 rue d'Eguisheim - BP5
51160 Hautvillers
France

Phone (326) 59.40.57

Fax (326) 59.43.74

<87>

Tribaut 1996 Brut

Absolutely bags of fruit.

Drink now-2008.

Trier

Staatliche Weinbaudomäne Trier
Deworastrasse 1
54290 Trier
Germany

Phone (6519) 75980

Fax (6514) 1993

<76>

Staatliche Weinbaudomäne Trier 2000 Domäne Avelsbach Riesling Brut

Good Riesling fruit, should age nicely.

Drink now-2005.

Turckheim

CV de Turckheim
16 rue des Tuilerie BP 6
68230 Turckheim
France

Phone (389) 30.23.60

Fax (389) 27.35.33

<77>

Mayerling NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

Rich fruit, not lifted. Nicely structured, good acidity.

Drink upon purchase.

Turm

Sektkellerei Am Turm
Weinstrasse 5
67146 Deidesheim
Germany

Phone (6326) 96640

Fax (6326) 966446

<76>

Sektkellerei Am Turm 2000 Turm Carat Brut

Intense Pinot flavour.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Sektkellerei Am Turm NV Turm Rubin Spätburgunder Trocken

Pure strawberries on the palate.

Drink upon purchase.

Union Champagne

7 rue Pasteur
51190 Avize
France

Phone (326) 57.94.22

Fax (326) 57.57.98

<89>

De Saint Gall 1995 Brut

Deliciously tangy fruit, with sherbety finish and a fluffy mousse.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Pierre Vaudon 1995 Premier Cru Brut

I have tasted two seemingly different versions of this vintage, although both equivalent in quality. One was very floral and elegant, with a vanilla-pod finish, while the other was much richer and more concentrated.

Drink now-2006.

Valley Vineyards

Stanlake Park
Twyford
Reading
Berkshire

RG10 0BN

Great Britain

Phone (118) 9340176

Fax (118) 9320914

<?>

Clocktower NV Gamay

I have not recommended this *cuvée* for a while because it has lacked the freshness, finesse and zip of earlier showings. The same still applies, but I include it in this edition because I have discovered that it is and always has been the same 1992-based wine. It is remarkable for an English fizz of this age. The crying shame is that Valley Vineyards did not sell all of this years ago, so that I could now be recommending more recent vintages of what would by now be one of England's finest.

Wait and see.

Vallformosa

Vilafranca del Penedès
08735 Vilobí del Penedès
Spain

Phone (93) 897 82 86

Fax (93) 897 83 55

<78>

Vallformosa 1999 Cava Brut Nature

Fruity frothy, has some elegance. Clean.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Vallformosa 2000 Cava Brut Rosé

Easy drinking.

Drink upon purchase.

<78>

Vallformosa NV Cava Brut

Excellent fresh fruit and acidity. Clean. Crisp.

Drink upon purchase.

Varichon & Clerc

Château "Les Séchallets"
BP 25 01420 Seyssel
France

Phone (450) 59.23.15

Fax (450) 59.05.35

<74>

Varichon & Clerc 1997 Royal Seyssel, Brut

A touch of sweetness for a brut and some pepperiness in the fruit that reminds me more of Jura than Savoy, albeit pure Savoyard Altesse. Characterful.

Drink upon purchase.

Velut

Champagne Jean Velut
9 rue du Moulin
10300 Montgueux
France

Phone (325) 74.83.31

Fax (325) 74.17.25

<84>

Jean Velut NV Brut

Very fresh and fruity.

Drink upon purchase.

Venoge

Champagne de Venoge

46 avenue de Champagne

51204 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 53.34.34

Fax (326) 53.34.35

<88>

De Venoge 1992 Grand Vin des Princes Brut

Losing fruit for complexity, but very rich. Atypical for year.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

De Venoge 1993 Grand Vin des Princes Brut

Down two points on the last edition, essentially because of the nose lacking in the last edition's finer points. Fruit on the palate, acidity and mousse all the same, although no sign of the 'coconutty oakiness' noticed in the 2002 edition.

Drink now-2005.

<88>

De Venoge 1995 Brut Millésimé

Creamy-biscuity richness.

Drink now-2006.

<84>

De Venoge NV Brut Sélect, Cordon Bleu

Merely fresh, easy-going and nameless at the 2002 Annual Champagne Tasting, this cuvée was, however, distinctly oxidative on the nose only a few months later. This would not normally enamour me, but the fruit was very fresh and had some intensity.

Drink now-2004.

Vereinigte Hospitien

Güterverwaltung

Krahnenufer 19

54290 Trier

Germany

Phone (6519) 450

Fax (9452) 060

<74>

Vereinigte Hospitien 1999 Riesling Brut

Fresh, clean, crisp Riesling.

Drink upon purchase.

Vesselle

Champagne Georges Vesselle

16 rue des Postes

51150 Bouzy

France

Phone (326) 57.00.15

Fax (326) 57.09.20

<83>

Georges Vesselle 1997 Brut Zero Millésime, Bouzy Grand Cru

Creamy-biscuity-malo aroma supported by creamy-crisp fruit.

Drink now-2005.

<?>

Georges Vesselle NV Brut, Bouzy Grand Cru

This was fresh, rich, fruity and very satisfying at WINE magazine's Champagne tasting, but did not impress at my blind tasting in June. Probably a different blend, definitely a different disgorgement.

Wait and see.

<84>

Georges Vesselle NV Brut Rosé, Bouzy Grand Cru

Sweet, talcum-powder perfumed fruit.

Wait and see.

Vesselle

Champagne Maurice Vesselle

2 rue Yvonnet

51150 Bouzy

France

Phone (326) 57.00.81

Fax (326) 57.83.08

<85>

Maurice Vesselle 1976 Brut Millésime, Bouzy Grand Cru

Frankly, if I am to drink a Champagne that is over a quarter of a century old, I expect better than 85 points, but I am spoiled and this is wonderfully evocative of the 1976 vintage. It is big and rich, with coconut and toffee building on the finish, and an impressively firm mousse. Not too many Champagne producers offer such a mature vintage.

Drink upon purchase.

<87>

Maurice Vesselle 1995 Brut Millésime, Bouzy Grand Cru

Very fresh, clean, vibrant fruit. Will get better over the next year or two, but drinking nicely enough now.

Drink now-2005.

Veuve Amiot

19 Rue Ackerman

St-Hilaire-St-Florent

49426 Saumur

France

Phone (241) 50.25.24

Fax (241) 50.17.66

<75>

Veuve Amiot 1995 Cuvée Elisabeth, Saumur Brut

Toasty-rich; clean, focused fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

<70>

Veuve Amiot NV Crémant de Loire Brut

Fruity entry-level Crémant de Loire.

Drink upon purchase.

<76>

Veuve Amiot NV Demi-Sec Saumur

Fresh, clean and correct, with fine fruit and mousse. None of the unclean smells closely associated with most Loire Demi-Sec and well-balanced sweetness and acidity on the finish.

Drink upon purchase.

<75>

Veuve Amiot NV Rouge Demi-Sec, Vin Mousseux

Very sweet indeed.

Drink upon purchase.

Veuve Clicquot

Champagne Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin

12 rue du Temple

51100 Reims

France

Phone (326) 40.25.42

Fax (326) 40.60.17

<91>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1993 La Grande Dame, Brut

Creamy-caramel aroma, which will go biscuity. Meanwhile the fresh, crisp fruit on the palate is already in biscuity heaven

Drink now-2009.

<95>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 La Grande Dame, Brut

Rich and biscuity, which is unusual, as Grande Dame usually goes toasty, while it's the straight vintage that goes biscuity.

Drink now-2006.

<90>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1990 La Grande Dame Rosé, Brut

Down two points on the last edition, due probably to the cherry fruits developing a pepperiness. The nose is going toasty, as Grande Dame of any colour tends to do (whereas the non-vintage and straight vintages tend to go biscuity). Excellent acidity.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Rich Réserve

An extra year has melded the mellow, creamy aromas to the fruit. Truly classy finish (at this point I upped the score one point). Keep this at least two years in a good cellar if you want to treat yourself.

Drink now-2008.

<87>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Brut Vintage Réserve

Definitely one for lovers of the creamy-caramel malo-dominated style. Sometimes this is so exaggerated that it becomes distinctly butterscotch, which I love in a thick ice-cream milkshake, but not so happy with in Champagne. I begin to wonder whether the Clicquot style is becoming too malo-dominated for my appreciation, although it can take it with such excellent acidity, and this vintage showed very well at WINE magazine's Champagne tasting. Needs a couple of years for biscuity complexity to overwhelm the caramel aromas.

Drink now-2008.

<86>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1995 Brut Rosé Réserve

This has a very similar creamy-caramel character to the 1995 Vintage Reserve, except that the red wine component seems to make the finish smoother. The creamy-caramel needs to develop typical Clicquot biscuitiness before this wine can climb any further up the scoreboard.

Drink now-2006.

<88>

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin NV Brut

Rich, smooth and tasty with plenty of finesse and no heaviness.

Drink now-2007.

Vigne Regali

Via Vittorio Veneto 22

15019 Strevi Al

Italy

Phone 144363485

Fax 144363777

<87>

Vigne Regali NV Asti, Spumante Dolce

Wonderfully fresh acidity and the creamiest mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

Vilarnau

Castell de Vilarnau

Vilarnau 34-36

08770 Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

Spain

Phone (93) 8912361

Fax (93) 8912913

<77>

Castell de Vilarnau 2000 Cava Chardonnay Brut Nature

Due to be released December 2002 and should be just right. Good fruit and structure.

Drink now-2004.

<78>

Castell de Vilarnau NV Cava Brut

Bags of elegant fruit. White peaches.
Drink now-2004.

Villa

Villa di A. Bianchi
Via Villa
12 - 25040 Monticelli Brusati
Italy
Phone (30) 652329
Fax (30) 6852305

<83>

Villa 1999 Franciacorta Satèn Brut

The pre-release sample of this wine had seriously structured fruit and was the best Villa Franciacorta tasted this year.
Drink now-2004.

Vilmart

Champagne Vilmart & Cie
4 rue de la République
51500 Rilly-la-Montagne
France
Phone (326) 03.40.01
Fax (326) 03.46.57

<89>

Vilmart 1990 Grand Cellier d'Or, Brut

In a recent taste-off between various old disgorged Vilmart vintages, this lovely fresh Grand Cellier d'Or outclassed the Coeur de Cuvée 1990 and Cuvée Création IIIe Millénaire 1990, both of which had aged and darkened prematurely.
Drink now-2006.

<93>

Vilmart 1992 Coeur de Cuvée, Brut Premier Cru (*magnum*)

Wickedly rich despite the oak, with brilliant acid-fired fruit dominating the finish.
Drink now-2007.

<98>

Vilmart 1996 Coeur de Cuvée, Brut Premier Cru

Just so impressive!
Drink now-2012.

<91>

Vilmart 1996 Cuvée Création, Brut Premier Cru

Very rich and decidedly oaky, but not so much that it interferes with the crisp, clean finish.
Drink now-2012.

<85>

Vilmart 1997 Grand Cellier d'Or, Brut 1er Cru

Not too oaky, but oak does dominate the nose, which brings back into question whether Vilmart has turned the corner as far as over-oaking its Champagnes goes. Certainly the intensity of 1996 could have forced itself over the oak in the Coeur de Cuvée from that year, but equally the less intense 1997 fruit might have been too easily overwhelmed by the oak in this wine. Only time will tell.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Vilmart NV Grande Réserve, Brut Premier Cru

It is great to see this cuvée back on form with lovely rich fruit and fine acidity.

Drink now-2004.

Volk

Weingut Volk

Koblenzer Strasse 6

56322 Spay-am-Rhein

Germany

Phone (2628) 8290

Fax (2628) 987416

<74>

Weingut Volk 1999 Steuermann Riesling Brut

Richer and sweeter than most at this level.

Drink upon purchase.

Vollereaux

Champagne Vollereaux

48 rue Léon-Bourgeois

51200 Pierry

France

Phone (326) 54.03.05

Fax (326) 55.06.37

<84>

Vollereaux 1995 Cuvée Marguerite, Brut

Herbal.

Drink upon purchase.

Vollrads

Schloss Vollrads

65375 Oestrich-Winkel

Germany

Phone (6723) 5270

Fax (6723) 6666

<76>

Schloss Vollrads 1999 Riesling Brut

Creamy-rich Riesling fruit, touch VA-lifted, but fine for immediate drinking.

Drink upon purchase.

Vouvray

Caves des Producteurs de Vouvray

BP 6 "La Vallée Coquette"

37210 Vouvray

France

Phone (247) 52.75.03

Fax (247) 52.66.41

<79>

Caves des Producteurs de Vouvray NV Tête de Cuvée Brut

Lovely fresh, non-greenage, expression of Chenin.

Drink upon purchase.

<72>

Caves des Producteurs de Vouvray NV Extra Réserve Brut

Golden-mature curiosity. Ripe-sweet fruit. Clean, but not what most sparkling wine drinkers would expect from a non-vintage, whatever the appellation or origin.

Drink upon purchase.

Vranken-Pommery

42 avenue de Champagne

51200 Epernay

France

Phone (326) 53.33.20

Fax (326) 51.87.07

<87>

Demoiselle NV Tête de Cuvée Brut, Vranken

Fine, floral aromas of some finesse followed by rich fruit and brilliant acidity.

Drink now-2005.

<86>

Demoiselle NV Rosé, Brut Grande Cuvée

As fresh as a daisy, with crisp, clean, red-fruit flavours.

Drink now-2004.

<84>

Demoiselle 1995 Brut

Concentrated.

Drink now-2007.

<84>

Charles Lafitte NV Tête de Cuvée, Brut

Sweet, yeast-complexed fruit. Very fresh, will go biscuity.

Drink now-2004.

<83>

Charles Lafitte NV Grande Cuvée Rosé, Brut

More pink than most Champagne rosés, with plenty of rich, youthful fruit and good acidity, but there is an underlying feeling that the aftertaste will not improve with time and could possibly go metallic.

Drink upon purchase.

Walsham

Champagne Olivier Walsham
3 rue de Rilly
51500 Chigny-les-Roses
France

Phone (326) 03.46.34

Fax (326) 03.45.61

<83>

Olivier Walsham 1995 Le Bel Amour, Brut Cuvée Spéciale

Good, clean fruit, supported by good acidity and likely to go biscuity.

Drink now-2005.

Warden Vineyard

Warden Abbey
Southill Park
Biggleswade
Beds SG18 9LJ
Great Britain

Phone (1462) 816226

Fax (1462) 812235

<70>

Warden Vineyard 1996 Extra Brut

This vintage was wonderfully fresh two editions ago, when it was full of Moscato-like fruit (although there is no Muscat, just Bacchus, Regner and Reichensteiner). It was a bit like a dry Asti, but the intervening years have not done it any favours. The terpenes have become overblown, giving the fruit a strong, tinned lychee character, which although not unpleasant, is merely a shadow of its former self.

Drink upon purchase.

Weber

Domaine Odile et Danielle Weber
68420 Eguisheim
France

Phone (389) 41.35.56

<74>

Odile et Danielle Weber NV Crémant d'Alsace Brut

A soft, fruity 1999-based cuvée with fresh aromas front to back.

Drink upon purchase.

Welty

Jean Michel Welty
22-24 Grand Rue
68500 Orschwihr
France

Fax (389) 76.09.03

Fax (389) 76.16.80

<75>

Welty NV Brut Rosé, Crémant d'Alsace

Soft, elegant, strawberry fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Wingara Wine Group

PO Box 1333

South Melbourne

Vic. 3205

Australia

Phone (3) 9682 5000

Fax (3) 9682 5200

<76>

Wingara 2000 Select Sparkling Shiraz

Creamy American oak and bags of fruit.

Drink upon purchase.

Winzersekt

Winzersekt Sprendlingen

Michel-Mort-Strasse

55576 Sprendlingen

Germany

Phone (6701) 93200

Fax (6701) 932050

<76>

Erzeugergemeinschaft Winzersekt 2000 Spätburgunder Extra Trocken Weissherbst

Nice, rich, tasty.

Drink upon purchase.

Wolfberger

CV de Eguisheim

Grand'Rue

68420 Eguisheim

France

Phone (389) 22.20.20

Fax (389) 23.47.09

<80>

Wolfberger NV Cuvée de l'An 2000, Crémant d'Alsace Brut (*magnum*)

The 2000 prominently displayed on this gold-coated magnum is not the vintage, although anyone would be forgiven for thinking so. This is in fact a 1997-based cuvée and a very young, exotically fruity one it is too.

Drink now-2004.

<77>

Wolfberger NV Cuvée Prestige, Crémant d'Alsace Brut

One of Wolfberger's earliest and most successful cuvées, this is a very fruity blend of Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir and Riesling. Touch exotic, very soft, yet paradoxically good acidity. Hint of

early-harvested fruit in the background, which will go toasty, but suggest drinking it while still in fruit-driven mode.

Drink upon purchase.

Yellowglen

Whites Road

Smythesdale

Vic. 3351

Phone (35342) 8617

Fax (35333) 7102

<72>

Yellowglen 1998 Vintage

Barrique contribution too obvious.

Drink upon purchase.

<74>

Yellowglen NV Pinot Noir Chardonnay Grande Cuvée

Okay, but not the same cuvée as the medals on the label!

Drink now-2004.

Yering Station

PO Box 390

Yarra Glen

Victoria 3775

Phone (3) 9730 1107

Fax (3) 9739 0135

<87>

Yarrabank 1994 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut

This vintage almost as impressive as it was a couple of years ago (88 points), although the then lemony-biscuity fruit has become decidedly toasty. Held together by exceptional extract and high acidity. At Yering Station itself, they favour the 1993, but although that is much lighter in colour and thus looks much younger, which is usually a sign of intrinsically higher quality, the fruit is much simpler and the acidity far less exciting.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Yarrabank 1997 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut

Almost as toasty as the 1994, but like that vintage it has good extract, if not quite as exceptional, and nicely high acids.

Drink now-2005.

<80>

Yarrabank 1997 Cuvée Pinot Noir Chardonnay

Very fresh and flowery, very soft, creamy mousse.

Drink upon purchase.

<80>

Yarrabank 1997 Sparkling

Very fresh, crisp and lively, with plenty of elegance and length.

Drink now-2004.

<85>

Yarrabank 1998 Thibaut & Gillet Cuvée, Brut

Lovely, fresh fruit aromas following onto the palate, where the fruit is rich, and highlighted by excellent acidity.

Drink now-2004.

Zwölberich

Weingut im Zwölberich

Schützenstrasse 14

55445 Langenlonsheim

Germany

Phone (6704) 9200

Fax (6704) 92040

<74>

Weingut im Zwölberich 1998 Zwölberich Royal Brut

Fresh, peachy fruit. (R.D. is a trademark belonging to Bollinger!)

Drink upon purchase.

Glossary

(Fr.) French (Ger.) German (It.) Italian (Port.) Portuguese (Sp.) Spanish

Abbotcato (It.) *See* Demi-Sec

Accessible Easy to drink.

Acetic acid The most important volatile acid found in wine (apart from carbonic acid), small amounts of acetic acid contribute positively to the attractive flavour of a wine, but too much gives an artificially high fruitiness that will eventually smell like vinegar.

Acidic Some people confuse this term with bitter. Think of lemon juice as acidic, lemon peel as bitter. A relatively high level of ripe acidity is vital for sparkling wine.

Aftertaste The flavour and aroma left in the mouth after the wine has been swallowed.

Ages gracefully A wine that retains finesse as it matures.

Aggressive The opposite of soft and smooth.

Agrafe (Fr.) An inverted U-shaped metal clip once used to secure the first corks during *prise de mousse*, but it is rarely encountered since the advent of crown caps has seen the demise of bottles bearing *bague carré*.

Amino acids Proteins formed by a combination of fruit esters, amino acids are formed during autolysis and are essential precursors to the complexity and finesse of a sparkling wine. *See* Autolysis, Autolytic, Reaction Maillard

Amylic The peardrop, banana or bubble-gum aromas of amyl or isoamyl acetate, excessive amounts of which can be produced if the first fermentation is conducted at a temperature that is too low. An amylic preponderance is not ideal for classic sparkling wine as it overshadows the subtle aromas of autolysis, and may prevent the development of post-disgorgement bottle-aromas. *See* Autolysis, Bottle-aromas

AOC (Fr.) Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, the top rung of the French wine quality system. Champagne is unique in that it does not have to indicate that it is an AOC wine on the label: the name Champagne is considered sufficient guarantee.

Aperitif Originally a beverage taken as a laxative, aperitif now refers to any drink before a meal. It refers to a relatively light, fresh, easy-drinking style of Champagne.

Appellation Literally a "name", this usually refers to an official geographically-based designation for a wine.

Aroma Some people use the word aroma for grape-derived fragrance, and bouquet for more winery odours, especially when developed in bottle; however the two are synonymous in this book.

Aromatic grape varieties Grapes such as Gewürztraminer, Muscat, and Riesling overwhelm the subtle effects of autolysis, and are thus too aromatic for classic brut sparkling wines, yet this character often makes them ideal for sweet styles of sparkling wine.

Assemblage (Fr.) Blend of base wines that creates the final *cuvée*.

Asti (It.) A town in Northern Italy that gives its name to the world's finest sweet sparkling wine.

Atmosphere A measurement of atmospheric pressure, one atmosphere is 15lbs per square inch (psi), which is the pressure our bodies are subjected to at sea-level. A sparkling wine can be anything up to six atmospheres, which is 90lbs psi - the equivalent to the pressure of a double-decker bus tyre. The actual pressure at serving temperature, however, is much lower, so although care must always be taken when opening a bottle, it is not like pulling the plug from a bus tyre. A fully sparkling wine of six atmospheres will, for example, be just 2.5 atmospheres at 6°C.

Austere A wine that lacks fruit or has insufficient dosage.

Autolysis The breakdown of yeast cells after the second fermentation. It is the amino acids created by autolysis that are the precursors to the complex aromas we call the inimitable "champagny" character. In my experience, it is the amount of autolysis found in a young sparkling wine that is directly responsible for the degree of finesse that builds with age.

Autolytic The smell of a freshly disgorged brut-style sparkling wine, which is not "yeasty" at all, but has an acacia-like flowery freshness.

Bague Carré (Fr.) A squared-off glass rim around the neck of a Champagne bottle onto which the *agrafe* is fixed.

Bague Couronne (Fr.) An exaggerated lip on the neck of a Champagne bottle is necessary if a crown-cap is to be used for the *prise de mousse*.

Balance Refers to the harmonious and therefore pleasing relationship between acids, alcohol, fruit, tannin (not often found in fizz, except for sparkling Shiraz) and other natural elements.

Balthazar Large bottle equivalent to 16 normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Barrel-fermented A few Champagnes like Krug still ferment in oak barrels that traditionally are well-used (averaging 40 years old) and do not contribute overt oakiness, although the oakiness does stand out against other Champagnes under blind conditions. However, an increasing number of producers are following the lead set by growers such as Selosse and Vilmart, who deliberately use new oak, and this fashion has been picked up by many New World producers.

Barrique (Fr.) Literally means barrel, but generically used in English-speaking countries for any small oak cask and often denotes the use of new oak. *See Pièce*

Base wines The fully-fermented dry wines that when blended together form the basis of a sparkling wine *cuvée*.

Biscuity A desirable aspect of bouquet found in some sparkling wines, particularly a well-matured Pinot Noir dominated Champagne. Some top-quality Chardonnay dominated Champagnes can slowly acquire a creamy-biscuitiness.

Bitterness Can be good or bad: [1] An unpleasant aspect of a poorly made wine. [2] An expected characteristic of an as yet undeveloped concentration of flavours that should, with maturity, become rich and delicious. *See* acidic

Blanc de Blancs (Fr.) A white wine made from white grapes.

Blanc de Noirs (Fr.) A white wine made from black grapes. In Champagne and throughout the rest of France, the art of the winemaker is to produce as colourless a wine as possible from black-skinned grapes, whereas in the New World a certain copper tinge is expected and there is often no difference between a genuine rosé and *blanc de noirs*.

Blind, blind tasting An objective tasting where the identity of wines is unknown to the taster until after he or she has made notes and given scores. All competitive tastings are blind.

Blowzy An overblown and exaggerated.

Blush wine Synonymous with rosé.

BOB An acronym for "Buyer's Own Brand", under which numerous retailers and restaurants sell wine.

Body The extract of fruit and alcoholic strength together give an impression of weight in the mouth.

Bottle-age The length of time a wine spends in bottle before it is consumed. A wine that has good bottle-age is one that has sufficient time to mature properly. Bottle-ageing has a mellowing effect.

Bottle-aromas Mellowing aromas created after disgorgement.

Bottle-fermented I use this without discrimination for any sparkling wine that has undergone a second fermentation in bottle, but when seen on a label, it invariably means the wine has been made by transfer method.

Bottle sizes *See* Large-format bottles

Bouquet *See* Aroma

Breed The finesse of a wine that is due to the intrinsic quality of grape and terroir combined with the irrefutable skill and experience of a great winemaker.

Brut (Fr.) Literally means raw or bone dry, but in practice there is always some sweetness and so can at the most only be termed dry. Technically relates to wines with between 0 and 15 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Brut de Brut (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Brut Intégral (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Brut Natur (Sp.) *See* Brut Natural

Brut Nature (Fr. & Sp.) Relatively recent category at the very driest end of the sweetness scale, between 0 and 3 grams per litre of residual sugar, thus infers no dosage whatsoever. Such wines do not age well after disgorgement, therefore if it is not ready for drinking, don't buy it.

Brut Non-Dosé (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Brut Sauvage (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Brut Zéro (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Bruto (Port. & Sp.) *See* Brut

Buttery Normally caused by diacetyl, which is a natural by-product of malolactic. The food industry uses diacetyl to make margarine taste like more like butter. Although a certain butteriness is fine in still Chardonnay, the slightest hint detracts from the finesse of a sparkling wines. This is why the Champagne producers use a special cocktail malolactic bacteria designed to create the least amount of diacetyl as possible.

Cap Classique South African equivalent of Spain's Cava appellation.

Caramel An extreme version of buttery.

Cava (Sp.) The generic appellation for *méthode champenoise* wines produced in various delimited areas of Spain.

Cave, caves (Fr.) Literally cellar, cellars.

Champagne (Fr.) Specifically a sparkling wine produced in a delimited area of northern France, the Champagne appellation is protected within the EU, and elsewhere. It is, however, abused by certain other countries, especially in the USA, where it is perfectly legal to sell domestically-produced "champagne". Even worse, the Champagne appellation is exploited in South America by the champenois themselves.

Champaña (Sp.) The appellation for sparkling wine made in Champagne is protected within the EU, whatever language it is translated into, but is sometimes used loosely elsewhere, especially in the USA, where it is legal to sell domestically produced "Champagne". It has also been exploited shamelessly by the champenois themselves, who have marketed their South American fizz as Champaña for more than 30 years.

Champenois (Fr.) The people of Champagne.

Chaptalisation (Fr.) Sugar added to grape *must* to raise a wine's alcoholic potential. Named after Jean-Antoine Chaptal, a brilliant chemist and technocrat who served Napoleon as minister of the interior and instructed *vignerons* on the advantages of adding sugar to grape juice.

Chardonnay One of the two greatest sparkling wine grapes for the classic brut style.

Charmat (Fr.) *See* Cuve close

Chef de caves (Fr.) Literally the "cellar manager", but also the winemaker, to a lesser or greater extent according to the traditions of the house.

Chocolaty Chocolate in Champagne is part of the complexity of a well-aged Chardonnay *cuvée*.

Citrus Citrussy indicates aromas and flavours of far greater complexity than mere lemony can suggest. Usually confined in Champagne to a *blanc de blancs*.

CIVC (Fr.) *See* Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne.

Classic, classy Both subjective words to convey an obvious impression of quality. These terms are applied to wines that not only portray the correct characteristics for their type and origin, but possess the *finesse* and *style* indicative of only the most top-quality wines.

Clean A straightforward term applied to any wine devoid of any unwanted or unnatural undertones of aroma and flavour.

Clos (Fr.) A plot of land that was once enclosed by walls. However, only those that still are enclosed by walls are considered true clos, since it is the physical effect of these walls that cut off the vines from the surrounding area, creating its own, superior *terroir*.

Closed Refers to the nose or palate of a wine that fails to open or show much character. It also implies that the wine has some qualities, even if they are 'hidden' - these should open up as the wine develops in bottle.

Cloying Applies to the sickly and sticky character of a poor sweet wine, where the finish is heavy and often unclean.

Coarse A term that can be applied to a "rough and ready" wine, which may not necessarily unpleasant, but is certainly not fine. In still wines it is more often than not associated with younger product, but in Champagne it occurs more often than not in more mature examples. Champagnes with too little dosage or none at all have a tendency to go coarse as they age.

Cold Duck A cheap, sweet, carbonated wine first made by the Bronte Winery in Detroit from the "foxy" Concord, Cold Duck enjoyed an extraordinary vogue in the USA throughout the 1960s.

The name comes from "Kalte Ente" (Cold Duck), a fizzy concoction made on the fly by German bar staff from the dregs of red and white wine, which they livened up with Sekt.

Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne or **CIVC** (Fr.) The semi-governmental interprofessional body that regulates the Champagne industry.

Commercial A diplomatic way for experts to say 'I don't like this, but I expect the masses will', a commercial wine is blended to a widely acceptable formula, which at worst may be bland and inoffensive.

Complete Refers to a wine has everything (fruit, tannin, acidity, depth, length, etc) and thus feels satisfying in the mouth.

Complexity An overworked word that refers to many different nuances of smell or taste. Great wines in their youth may have a certain complexity, but it is only with maturity in bottle that a wine will eventually achieve full potential in terms of complexity.

Cool-fermented An obviously cool-fermented wine is very fresh, with simple aromas of apples, pears and bananas, at best, but could be blighted by more oppressive aromas of peardrops, bubblegum or nail-varnish. *See* Amylic

Corked Nothing inherently wrong with the wine, the term corked applies to a penicillin infection inside the cork, which gives an unpleasant musty character, spoiling an otherwise good wine.

Not too long ago it was highly improbable to have two consecutive corked bottles of the same wine, but every day scientists are discovering 'corky' smelling compounds that have nothing to do with the cork, so it is quite possible for entire batches of wine to smell or taste corked.

Furthermore, the most common of these (*see* TCA) affects casks as much as cork, and the spores are highly volatile, thus one affected cork sitting in a plastic bag with thousands of other can infect the entire batch. However, no wine buyer should purchase such wines, let alone put them on the shelf.

Correct All the correct characteristics for its type and origin, but not necessarily an exciting wine.

Courtier en vins (Fr.) A wine broker who acts as the go between growers and producers.

Crayères (Fr.) Chalk-pits dug out in Gallo-Roman times.

Creamy Dr Tony Jordan believes that creaminess in a sparkling wine is probably a combination of the finesse of the mousse (created by the most minuscule of bubbles and their slow release) and an understated malolactic influence, the combined effect of which is picked up at the back of the throat on the finish of the wine, and this is most apparent in Chardonnay-based wines.

Creamy-biscuity *See* Biscuity

Creamy-caramel malo A lesser, more acceptable version of caramel.

Crémant (Fr.) Originally a Champagne with a gentler mousse than normal, this term is now reserved in the EU for various sparkling wine appellations, such as Crémant d'Alsace, Crémant de Loire etc.

Crisp A clean sparkling wine with good acidity backing up the effervescence on the finish.

Cross A vine that has been propagated by crossing two or more varieties within the same species (*Vitis vinifera* for example), while a hybrid is a cross between two or more varieties from more than one species.

Crown-cap The common beer-bottle cap now widely used as the temporary closure while a sparkling wine undergoes its second fermentation.

Cru (Fr.) Literally a growth, a *cru* normally refers to a vineyard site, although in Champagne it is used for an entire village. *See* Premier Cru, Grand Cru

Cushiony A beautifully soft, ultra-fine sensation caused by the minuscule bubbles of a first rate mousse.

Cuve close (Fr.) A method invented by Eugène Charmat of producing sparkling wine through a second fermentation in a sealed vat or tank. Synonymous with Charmat method or tank method.

Cuvée (Fr.) Originally the wine of one *cuve* or vat, this now refers to a precise blend or specific product that could well be blended from several vats.

CV (Fr.) Abbreviation for Caves Vinicole and variations on this theme.

Débourbage (Fr.) The settling process that removes bits of skin, pips and other flotsam and jetsam from the freshly pressed grape juice.

Definition A wine with good definition is one that is not just clean with a correct balance, but also has a positive expression of its grape variety and/or origin.

Dégorgement (Fr.) *See* Disgorgement

Delicate Describes the quieter characteristics of quality that give a wine charm.

Demi-Sec (Fr.) Literally semi-dry, but semi-sweet for all practical purposes, a Demi-Sec may contain between 35 and 50 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Depth Refers first to a wine's depth of flavour and secondly to its depth of interest.

Deutscher Qualitätsschaumwein (Ger.) Same as *Deutscher Sekt*.

Deutscher Qualitätsschaumwein BA (Ger.) Same as *Deutscher Sekt BA*.

Deutscher Qualitätsschaumwein Bestimmter Anbaugebiete (Ger.) Same as *Deutscher Sekt BA*.

Deutscher Sekt (Ger.) A sparkling wine made by any method (though probably *cuve close*), exclusively comprising of wine from German-grown grapes. It may indicate a maximum of two grape names and should be at least 10 months old when sold.

Deutscher Sekt BA (Ger.) A sparkling wine made by any method (though probably *cuve close*), exclusively comprising of wine made from grapes grown in one of Germany's 13 specified regions, although it may indicate an even smaller denomination if 85 per cent of the grapes come from the named area.

Deutscher Sekt Bestimmter Anbaugebiete (Ger.) Same as *Deutscher Sekt BA*.

Disgorgement The removal of sediment after the second fermentation.

Distinctive A wine with a positive character. All fine wines are distinctive to one degree or another, but not all distinctive wines are necessarily fine.

DOC/DOCG (It.) Denominazione di Origine Controllata/e Garantita. Italian wine quality system based on grape variety and origin. "Garantita" denotes an extra rung of quality.

Doce (Port.) *See* Doux

Dolce (It.) *See* Doux

Dosage (Fr.) The amount of sugar solution added to a sparkling wine after disgorgement.

Doux (Fr.) Sweet. In excess of 50 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Dry straw *See* Straw

Dulce (Sp.) *See* Doux

Easy-drinking Probably not a complex wine, but it slips down easily.

Echelle des Crus (Fr.) All the wine-producing of Champagne are classified on a percentage basis known as the *échelle des crus*. Those considered to be *grands crus* receive the maximum *échelle* of 100%, whereas those at the bottom of the scale are classified at the minimum of 80%. Villages with vineyards rated between 90 and 99% inclusive are considered to be *premiers crus*. At one time the minimum *échelle* was just 22.55%, but due to various ad hoc re-classifications this has gradually increased over the years and many villages have been 'promoted' in the

process. There used to be 12 *grands crus* and 32 *premiers crus* - now there are 17 and 43 respectively.

Elegant A subjective term applied to wines that may be described as stylish and possessing some finesse.

Elevated fruit Synonymous with VA fruitiness.

English aroma A very fresh herbaceous character.

Esters, Estery A prickly, ethereal-minerally impression. Esters are essential components of any wine and contribute to its fruitiness, but when estery aromas dominate a wine it is unready and has probably been disgorged too soon.

Expansive A wine that is big, but open and accessible.

Expressive A wine that is expressive is true to its grape variety and area of origin.

Extract The term covers everything all the solid in a wine and literally gives the wine its body.

Explosive A sparkling wine can be explosive in the bottle, which is to say it can gush all over the place even when chilled and opened skilfully. This will either be due to a poor quality inner-surface of the bottle, where deformities in the glass act as nuclei for the release of gas before the wine gets out of the bottle, or to microscopic elements acting as nuclei in the wine in itself. Sparkling wine can also be explosive in the mouth, which can also be the result of nuclei in the wine, but may also be due to an excess of carbonic gas that is free (ie., not bound to the wine). The subject of free and bound carbonic gas is far less researched and understood than that of free and sulphur, but it is known that the longer a sparkling wine is kept at cooler temperatures, the more carbonic gas that is bound. We also know that free carbonic gas is the first to be released in the glass, while it is the bound carbonic that keeps a sparkling wine fizzy in the long-term.

Extra-Brut In theory between 0 and 6 grams per litre of residual sugar, thus drier than most bruts. Possibly no dosage, but probably a very light one only, since wines without dosage can now utilise the Brut Nature designation.

Extra Herb (Ger.) *See* Extra-Brut

Extra-Sec (Fr.) Literally "extra-dry", but merely dry in most cases, since such wines may contain between 12 and 20 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Extra Trocken (Ger.) *See* Extra-Sec

Fat A wine full in body and extract. It is good for any wine to have some fat, but fat in an unqualified sense can be derogatory and no wine should be too fat, as it will be flabby or too blowzy.

Feminine Subjective term used to describe a wine with a preponderance of delicately attractive qualities, rather than weight or strength. A wine of striking beauty, grace and finesse with a silky texture and exquisite style.

Fermentation The biochemical process by which enzymes secreted by yeast cells convert sugar molecules into almost equal parts of alcohol and carbonic gas.

Fermentación en botella (Sp.) Literally 'bottle-fermented', thus actually transfer method.

Fermentazione naturale (It.) Literally 'naturally fermented', which should apply to every wine ever made - even a carbonated fizz must have been naturally fermented in the first place. What it is supposed to infer, however, is that a wine has been rendered sparkling by natural refermentation in a tank or bottle (usually the former).

Finesse That elusive, indescribable quality that separates a fine wine from those of lesser quality.

Fixed sulphur Added to wine primarily to prevent oxidation, which it does by fixing itself to the oxygen on a molecular basis. Once a molecule of sulphur is fixed, it stays fixed. It continues to do its job, keeping the oxygen prisoner, but it is no longer free to protect the wine against other

molecules of oxygen: only free sulphur can do that. Sulphur can fix to all sorts of molecules in a wine, mostly harmless, but a few things are potentially hazardous in a smelly way. When sulphur fixes with hydrogen, for example, hydrogen sulphide (stink bombs, bad eggs) is formed. These are called fixed-sulphur faults. On the other hand, we are just beginning to understand that the toasty bottle-aroma most Champagne aficionados adores is in fact a fixed-sulphur fault!

Flaschengärung nach dem Traditionellen Verfahren (Ger.) *See* méthode champenoise

Fleshy Refers to a wine with plenty of fruit and extract and infers a certain underlying firmness.

Flowery, Floral aromas are found in young sparkling wines, and are the precursors to fuller, deeper, fruitier aromas of maturity. Specific acacia aromas are found in recently disgorged wines of any age.

Foamy A less acute degree of explosive.

Foudre (Fr.) A large wooden cask or vat.

Foxy The very distinctive, highly perfumed character of certain indigenous American grape varieties that can be sickly sweet and cloying to unconditioned European and Antipodean palates.

Free Sulphur The acrid odour of sulphur in a wine should, if detected, be akin to the smell of a recently extinguished match, and will go away with time in bottle, or a swirl of the glass.

Frizzante (It.) Semi-sparkling or slightly fizzy, the equivalent of *pétillant*.

Frizzantino (It.) Very lightly sparkling, the equivalent of *perlant*.

Fruity Although wine is made from grapes, it will not have a fruity flavour unless the grapes used have the correct combination of ripeness and acidity.

Full Usually refers to body, eg., full-bodied. But a wine can be light in body yet full in flavour.

Fully fermented A wine that is allowed to complete its natural course of fermentation and so yield a totally dry wine.

Fully sparkling A wine with a pressure of 5-6 atmospheres.

Fut (Fr.) An empty *pièce*.

Gasificado (Sp.) Artificially carbonated wine.

Generic A wine, usually blended, of a general appellation.

Generous A generous wine gives its fruit freely on the palate, while an ungenerous wine is likely to have little or no fruit and, probably, an excess of tannin. All wines should have some degree of generosity.

Gluggy Easy to guzzle.

Goût américain (Fr.) From the 19th century through to the 1920s, there was not an established regime of *dosage* for Champagne as there is today. Instead of *brut, sec, demi-sec* etc., the different market determined the *dosage* of Champagne. The American market was the third sweetest, and we know from the observation of Henry Vizetelly that in 1882 Champagnes labelled *gout américain* contained between 110 and 165 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Goût anglais (Fr.) Although the English market was demanded the driest Champagne, and the first Champagnes ever to be labelled *brut* were shipped to London sometime after 1876, at 10-30 grams per litre of residual sugar, the concept of *brut* was obviously relative to its times. Vizetelly recorded that the *gout anglais* varied between 22 and 66 grams, which was considered dry in its day, but would now be though very sweet indeed.

Goût français (Fr.) In the late-19th century, *goût français*, a style that was popular in both France and Germany, carried a *dosage* of between 165 and 200 grams, making it second only in sweetness to Champagnes destined for Russian market (which did not have a designated "*goût*",

but according to Vizetelly contained between 200 and 300 grams, which is two to three times as sweet as Château d'Yquem).

Grand cru (Fr.) Literally "great growth", in regions such as Burgundy, where its use is strictly controlled, this term has real meaning, but in other winemaking areas where no controls exist, it will mean very little. Between these two extremes is Champagne, where the *grands crus* are strictly controlled on the one hand (there are only 17), but applicable to entire villages - rather than specific, superior vineyards - on the other, thus encompasses vineyards of varying intrinsic quality. *See* Echelle des Crus

Grande marque (Fr.) Literally a 'great brand' or 'famous brand', in the world of wine the term *grande marque* is specific to Champagne and until 1997 applied to members of a 'club' called the Syndicat de Grandes Marques, but this was disbanded when they could not agree on quality criteria for continued membership. The term will continue to be used, particularly in English-speaking countries, for the most famous brands.

Granvas (Sp.) Same as *cuve close*.

Grapey Can be applied to an aroma or flavour that is reminiscent of grapes rather than wine, a particular characteristic of German wines and wines made from various Muscat or Muscat-like grapes.

Green Young and tart, as in Vinho Verde. It can be either a derogatory term, or simply an indication of youthful wine that might well improve.

Halbsüss (Austrian) *See* Demi-Sec

Halbtrocken (Ger.) *See* Demi-Sec

Handgerüttelt (Ger.) Hand-riddled (manual *remuage*), thus the wine has been bottle-fermented and not transferred, therefore this term can be taken to mean *méthode champenoise*.

Harsh A more derogatory form of coarse.

Herb (Ger.) *See* Brut

Herbaceous A green-leaf or white-currant characteristic that is usually associated with under-ripeness, particularly with aromatic grape varieties.

High-tone A term used in this book to describe aromas of bouquet that aspire to elegance, but that can become too exaggerated and be slightly reminiscent of vermouth.

Hollow A wine that appears to lack any real flavour in the mouth compared to the promise shown on the nose. Usually due to a lack of body, fruit or acidity.

Honeyed Many Champagnes develop a honeyed character through bottle-age, as indeed can Riesling Sekte.

Horizontal tasting This is a tasting of different wines of the same style or vintage, as opposed to a vertical tasting, which consists of different vintages of the same wine.

Jahrgangsekt (Ger.) Literally 'vintage Sekt', this merely means a sparkling wine from a single year and does not infer any special connotation of quality.

Jammy Commonly used to describe a fat and eminently drinkable red wine rich in fruit, if perhaps a bit contrived and lacking a certain elegance.

Jeroboam Large bottle equivalent to four normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Kabinett The first rung of predication in Germany's QmP range, one below Spätlese and often drier than a QbA.

Klassische Flaschengärung (Ger.) *See* *méthode champenoise*

Lactic acid The acid that develops in sour milk, which is also created in wine during the malolactic fermentation.

Large-format bottles Large-format bottles are confusingly different according to the region. The most famous oversized bottles are found in Champagne and Bordeaux. However, a Jeroboam in Champagne is the equivalent of four normal-sized 75cl bottles, whereas in Bordeaux it is six bottles. Furthermore, there is no such thing as a Rehoboam in Bordeaux, where this size is known as an Imperiale. An Imperiale is in fact the largest Bordeaux bottle, whereas in Champagne the Salmanazar, Balthazar and Nebuchadnezzar are all very much larger formats. The full list of classic large-format Champagne bottles is as follows:

NOTE TO MATT> PLEASE INDENT THE FOLLOWING UNDER Bottle sizes, VERTICALLY ALIGN THE "=" SIGN AND DECIMALLY ALIGN THE NUMBER OF BOTTLES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING IT:

Magnum = 2 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Jeroboam = 4 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Rehoboam = 6 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Methuselah = 8 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Salmanazar = 12 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Balthazar = 16 normal-sized 75cl bottles
Nebuchadnezzar = 20 normal-sized 75cl bottles

The larger the bottle, the longer the wine should last, but this theory cannot be applied with any certainty in Champagne for sizes larger than a Jeroboam. Larger formats are theoretically superior for ageing because the air-space differs insignificantly compared to the increased volume of wine, thus the rate of oxidation should be reduced. However, it is legally permitted fill sizes larger than the Jeroboam with finished Champagne (*see* Transvasage) and most houses that market these party-sized bottles do just that.

L.D. A sparkling wine term that stands for "late disgorged" and paradoxically means the same as "recently disgorged". The use of L.D. infers that the wine in question is of a mature vintage that has been kept on its yeast deposit for an extended period. *See* R.D.

Lees The sediment that accumulates in a vat or bottle during the fermentation of a wine.

Length A wine that has length indicates that the flavour lingers in the mouth a long time after swallowing. If two wines taste the same, yet you definitely prefer one, but do not understand why, it is probably because the one you prefer has a greater length.

Lie (Fr.) The French for lees. *Sur lie* refers to a wine kept in contact with its lees.

Lieu-dit (Fr.) A named site within a vineyard.

Light A qualification of body.

Lime This is the classic character of Sémillon and Riesling when grown in many areas of Australia, which explains why Sémillon from the Hunter Valley used to be sold as Hunter Riesling.

Linalool Found in some grapes, particularly Muscat and Riesling varieties. It contributes to the peachy-flowery fragrance that is the varietal characteristic of wines made from Muscat grapes.

Lingering Normally applied to the finish of a wine - an aftertaste that literally lingers.

Liqueur d'expédition (Fr.) Solution of sugar and wine added to a sparkling wine after disgorgement.

Liqueur de tirage (Fr.) The bottling liqueur: wine, yeast and sugar added to still Champagne to induce the mousse.

Maceration A term that is usually applied to the period during the vinification process when the fermenting juice is in contact with its skins.

Maderised The terms maderised and oxidised are sometimes erroneously believed to be synonymous, but Madeira is reductive, while Sherry is oxidative. All Madeiras are maderised by slowly heating the wines in specially constructed ovens, then slowly cooling them. Apart from Madeira itself, this maderised character is undesirable in all but certain Mediterranean wines that are deliberately made in a *rancio* style (the French tend to use *rancio* in preference to *maderisé*, which they all too often confuse with oxidise).

Magnum Large bottle equivalent to two normal-sized 75cl bottles, the ideal volume for ageing Champagne.

Malic A tasting term that describes the green apple aroma and flavour found in some young wines, due to the presence of malic acid, the dominant acid found in apples.

Malic acid Although this very harsh-tasting (green apple on mild steel) acid diminishes during the ripening process, a significant quantity still persists in ripe grapes and, although reduced by fermentation, in the wine too.

Malolactic, Malo A biochemical process that transforms the hard malic acid of unripe grapes into soft lactic acid and carbonic gas.

Marque A brand or make.

Mean An extreme qualification of ungenerous.

Meio-Seco (Port.) *See* Demi-Sec

Mellow A wine that is round and nearing its peak of maturity.

Méthode champenoise (Fr.) The process that converts a fully-fermented still wine into a sparkling wine by a second fermentation in the same bottle in which it is sold. In the EU this term is forbidden on the label of any wine other than Champagne, which of course never uses it.

Méthode Classique (Fr.) Synonymous with *méthode champenoise*.

Méthode Traditionnelle (Fr.) Synonymous with *méthode champenoise*.

Methuselah Large bottle equivalent to eight normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Metodo Classico (It.) *See* méthode champenoise

Metodo Tradizionale (It.) *See* méthode champenoise

Microclimate Due to a combination of shelter, exposure, proximity to mountains, water mass and other topographical features unique to a given area, a vineyard can enjoy (or be prone to) a specific microclimate.

Mid-palate [1] The centre-top of your tongue. [2] A subjective term to describe the middle of the taste sensation when taking a mouthful of wine. Could be hollow, if the wine is thin and lacking, or full, if rich and satisfying.

Mild (Ger.) *See* Doux

Mineral This is normally a positive term indicating a certain complexity and finesse, but some wines can have a minerally aftertaste that can sometimes be unpleasant.

Mono-cru Champagne made from a single *cru* or village.

Monopole (Fr.) Single ownership of one vineyard.

Mousse The foam produced by thousands of bubbles in a sparkling wine.

Mousseux *See* Vin Mousseux

Mouthfill Good mouthfill infers a certain satisfaction or completeness, and is the opposite of hollow.

Mushroom Not a mustiness, but the attractive aroma of freshly peeled mushroom. This is quite common in old vintages of Champagne and, curiously, for some wines it affects just a few bottles in a batch, yet not others, while for other wines this characteristic can pervade every single bottle. For the moment, no one knows its origin. At one time it was thought to be a

characteristic of over-mature Meunier, but the instances where it affects only some bottles in a batch would seem to rule this out. One suggestion has been that it is a yeast-derived characteristic, the rationale being that yeasts are a form of mushroom, but this explanation strikes many oenologists as being a bit too logical. The latest idea is that it could be a reaction between the yeast and the cork, when a little wine is trapped between the lip of the bottle and the top of the cork at bottling. Although not conclusive, since hearing this explanation, I have observed an unusually large deposit of dried wine on the lip of those bottles that have a fresh mushroom aroma.

Nebuchadnezzar Large bottle equivalent to 20 normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Négociant (Fr.) Commonly used to describe larger wine producing companies, the term is derived from the traditional practice of negotiating with growers to buy grapes and wholesalers or other customers to sell the wine produced.

Négoce (Fr.) Collective form of *négociant*.

Neutral grape varieties The opposite of aromatic grapes, these include virtually all the minor, nondescript varieties that produce bland tasting, low-quality wines, but also encompass better known varieties such as the Melon de Bourgogne, Aligoté, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier and even classics like Chardonnay and Sémillon. Neutral varieties are for fine sparkling wines of the *brut* style because their characteristics are enhanced by the subtle effects of autolysis and mellowing bottle-aromas, whereas aromatic grapes fight against these processes.

Non-dosage (Fr.) Synonymous with Brut Natural.

Non-vintage In theory a blend of at least two different years, but many producers, particularly growers in Champagne, grade their *cuvées* on selection, often selling a pure vintage *sans année* (without year).

Nose The smell or odour of a wine, encompassing both aroma and bouquet.

Oaky The aromatic qualities picked up from new oak, which usually consists of the creamy-vanilla aroma of *vanillin*, a natural oak aldehyde that also happens to be the principal aromatic component in vanilla pods.

Oenologist, oenology Pronounced 'enologist' and 'enology' (and spelt this way in the USA), oenology is the scientific study of wine, which is a branch of chemistry, and most winemakers today are qualified oenologists with practical, hands-on production experience and an understanding of viticulture.

Off vintage or year A year in which many poor wines are produced due to adverse climatic conditions, such as very little sunshine during the summer, which can result in unripe grapes, or rain at the harvest, which can result in rot. Generally a vintage to be avoided, but approach any opportunity to taste the wines with an open mind because there are always good wines made in every vintage.

Opulent Suggestive of a rather luxurious varietal aroma, very rich, but not quite blowzy.

Organic A generic term covering wines that are produced using the minimum amount of SO₂, from grapes that have been grown without chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides.

Over-oxidative Verges on oxidised, and infers aldehydic aromas such as the sherry-like acetaldehyde.

Overtone A dominating element of nose and palate and often one that is not directly attributable to the grape or wine.

Oxidation, oxidised From the moment grapes are pressed or crushed, oxidation sets in and the juice or wine will be oxidized to a certain and increasing extent. Oxidation is an unavoidable part of fermentation and an essential to the maturation process, but in order not to mislead, it is best

to speak of a mature or, at the extreme, an oxidative wine because when oxidized is used, even amongst experts, it will invariably be in an extremely derogatory manner.

Oxidative A wine that openly demonstrates the character of maturation on the nose or palate, thus the longer it takes to appear in a wine, the more finesse it will have. *See* Acetaldehyde

Palate The flavour or taste of a wine.

Peak The so-called peak in the maturity of a wine is subject to the consumer's point of appreciation. Those liking fresher, crisper wines will perceive an earlier peak in the same wine than 'golden oldy' drinkers. A rule of thumb that applies to both extremes of taste is that a wine will remain at its peak for as long as it took to reach it.

Peardrop *See* Amylic.

Peppery A somewhat incongruous character in a sparkling wine, I have managed to track it down to Chardonnay, but not Chardonnay of great class, probably planted on less than suitable soil, and possibly young. If detected as just a flicker in a blend, it will eventually be subsumed by the other wines, and can even add to the future complexity of a *cuvée*, but be wary where it is the solitary or dominant character.

Perlant (Fr.) Lightly sparkling.

Perlwein (Ger.) Cheap, semi-sparkling wine made by carbonating a still wine.

Pétillance, pétillant (Fr.) A wine with enough carbonic gas to create a light sparkle.

Petrol, petroly With some bottle-age, the finest Rieslings have a vivid and zesty bouquet that some refer to as petroly. The petroly character has an affinity with various zesty and citrusy odours, but many lemony, citrusy, zesty smells are totally different from one another and the Riesling's petroly character is both singular and unmistakable. As great Riesling matures, so it also develops a honeyed character, bringing a classic, honeyed-petrol richness to the wine.

Pièce (Fr.) A standard Champagne cask measure of 205 litres, the term *pièce* is used only when the barrel is full of wine. When it is empty it is called simply a *fut*.

Pinot Noir (Fr.) Black grape variety used in Champagne.

Post-disgorgement ageing The period between disgorgement and when the wine is consumed. With the sudden exposure to air after an extended period of ageing under anaerobic conditions, the development of a sparkling wine after disgorgement is very different from that before.

Pressure The pressure inside a bottle of sparkling wine is affected by temperature and altitude. Pressure increases as the temperature rises, but decreases as the altitude climbs. To be uniform when comparing the pressure of different sparkling wines, oenologists around the world refer to pressures at 20°C and sea-level.

QbA (Ger.) Germany's *Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete* is theoretically the equivalent of the French AOC.

Quaffing An unpretentious wine that is easy and enjoyable to drink.

Qualitätsschaumwein (Ger.) A so-called 'quality sparkling wine', this can be produced by any member state of the EU, but the term should be qualified by the country of origin (of the wine), thus only Deutscher Qualitätsschaumwein will necessarily be from Germany.

R.D. A sparkling wine term that stands for "recently disgorged", the initials R.D. are the trademark of Champagne Bollinger (which often comes as something of a surprise to sparkling wine producers in other countries). *See* L.D.

Reaction Maillard An interaction between amino acids created during autolysis and residual sugar added by dosage, Reaction Maillard is responsible for many of the mellow, complex post-disgorgement aromas adored by drinkers of mature Champagne.

Récoltant-manipulant (Fr.) A grower who produces Champagne exclusively from his or her own vineyards.

Reductive The less exposure it has to air, the more reductive a wine will be. Different as they are in basic character, Champagne, Muscadet *sur lie* and Beaujolais Nouveau are all examples of a reductive, rather than oxidative, style. From the vividly autolytic Champagne, through Muscadet *sur lie* with its barest hint of autolytic character, to the amylic aroma of Beaujolais Nouveau.

Rehoboam Large bottle equivalent to six normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Remuage (Fr.) The process whereby the sediment is encouraged down to the neck of the bottle in preparation for disgorgement.

Reserve wines Older wines added to a non-vintage blend.

Reticent Suggests that the wine is holding back on its nose or palate, perhaps through youth, and may well develop with a little more maturity.

Reverse saignée In Champagne this involves a majority of Pinot Noir, commonly as much as 90%, which has undergone a light *saignée*, and is then blended with a small amount of Chardonnay for freshness.

Rich, richness A balanced wealth of fruit and depth on the palate and finish.

Riche (Fr.) Synonymous with Demi-Sec.

Ripe Grapes ripen, wines mature, although some of the constituents of a wine, such as fruit and even acidity, can be referred to as ripe. Tasters should however beware of mistaking a certain residual sweetness for ripeness.

Rooty Usually refers to a certain rooty richness found in Pinot Noir. Not vegetal, which is a negative term.

Rosado (Sp.) Pink.

Rosé (Fr.) Pink.

Saignée (Fr.) The process of drawing off surplus liquid from the press or vat in order to produce a rosé wine from the free-run juice. In cooler wine regions, the remaining mass of grape pulp may be used to make a darker red wine than would normally be possible because of a greater ratio of solids to liquid.

Salmanazar Large bottle equivalent to 12 normal-sized 75cl bottles.

Sassy Used to describe fruit in a wine that is lively, jaunty, breezy etc.

Satèn (It.) Literally meaning satin, this term has been coined by Franciacorta producers for a softer, *crémant* style of sparkling wines. The best Franciacorta Satèn are often *barrique*-fermented.

Schaumwein (Ger.) Literally 'sparkling wine' and with no further qualification (such as Qualitätsschaumwein), this is merely the same as *Sekt*.

Sboccatura (It.) Disgorged.

Sec (Fr.) Literally dry, but effectively medium to medium-sweet. A Sec may contain between 17 and 35 grams per litre of residual sugar.

Secco (It.) *See Sec*

Seco (Port. & Sp.) *See Sec*

Second fermentation, secondary fermentation Strictly speaking this is the fermentation that occurs in bottle during the *méthode champenoise*, but the malolactic is sometimes erroneously referred to as the second fermentation.

Sekt (Ger.) Sparkling wine, usually *cuve close*.

Semi-Dulce (Sp.) *See Demi-Sec*

Short Refers to a wine that may have a good aroma and initial flavour, but falls short on the finish, its taste quickly disappearing after the wine has been swallowed.

Sin Cosecha (Sp.) Non-vintage.

Smooth The opposite of aggressive and more extreme than round.

Soft An attractive smoothness caused when fruit has the upper-hand over acidity. This is very desirable, but a wine that is too soft will lack acidity.

Solera (Sp.) A system of continually refreshing an established blend with a small amount of new wine (equivalent in proportion to the amount extracted from the *solera*) to effect a wine of consistent quality and character. A few Champagne producers use this method for keeping their reserve wines, although it reduces the number of building blocks at the winemaker's disposal when blending a *cuvée*.

Sous marque (Fr.) Second brand. An ancillary label under which second quality wines are sold, although the standard need not necessarily inferior in any general sense.

Spätlese (Ger.) A QmP wine that is one step above Kabinett, but one below Auslese. It is fairly sweet and made from late-picked grapes.

Sprightly fruitiness I have deliberately used this expression instead of VA fruitiness because even though the latter is not a truly derogatory term, it has negative connotations, and would be taken the wrong way more times than not. Sprightly fruitiness is not even referred to under VA fruitiness, making the full explanation available only to readers curious enough to browse this far through the glossary. Hopefully those who do penetrate this triple-layered definition will appreciate that a preponderance of negative elements can sometimes create a positive effect.

Spritz, spritzig (Ger.) Synonymous with *pétillant*.

Spumante (It.) Literally just sparkling, but in practice *spumante* normally refers to a fully sparkling wine. *See* Fully sparkling

Straw Strawlike aromas often blight sparkling wines. Sometimes dry-straw, other times wet-straw, and others still are just strawlike. Producers say it is part of the complexity, but it strikes me as a very dull, ill-defined sort of complexity and one that is not completely clean. Perhaps it comes from the yeast, or maybe rotten grapes, or even the reaction of yeast-contact to wine made from a certain percentage of rotten grapes. In any case, this is not a positive attribute, although where it appears in this book the wines obviously have sufficient going for them to overcome these strawlike aromas, otherwise they would not be recommended.

Structure The structure of a wine is literally composed of its solids (tannin, acidity, sugar, and extract or density of fruit flavour) in balance with the alcohol, and how positively the form and feel in the mouth. It is interesting to speculate how much of Champagne's classic lean structure is the result of chaptalisation. Virtually all non-vintage Champagnes are chaptalised, as indeed are the majority of vintage Champagnes, and this obviously increases the amount of alcohol for the weight of fruit. *See* Chaptalisation

Stylish Wines possessing all the subjective qualities of charm, elegance and finesse. A wine might have the 'style' of a certain region or type, but a wine is either stylish or it is not. It defies definition.

Subtle Although this should mean a significant yet understated characteristic, it is often employed by wine snobs and frauds who taste a wine with a famous label and know that it should be special, but cannot detect anything exceptional and need an ambiguous word to talk their way out of the hole they have dug for themselves. The most honest use of subtle in this book refers to the effect of autolysis.

Sulphur, SO₂ A preservative used primarily to prevent oxidation. *See* Free Sulphur and Fixed sulphur

Supple Indicates a wine that is easy to drink, not necessarily soft, but a more graceful form of ease than the word round can manage.

Sur lie (Fr.) Refers to wines, usually Muscadets, that have been kept on the lees and have not been racked or filtered prior to bottling. Although this increases the possibility of bacterial infection, the risk is worth taking for wines made from neutral grape varieties. It also avoids aeration and retains more of the carbonic gas created during fermentation imparting a certain liveliness and freshness. In the case of sparkling wines, it is better to keep reserve wines *sur lie* than to rack and filter them because it reduces the production of terpenes and helps to retain the nitrogenous matter that makes the wines more susceptible to autolysis.

Sweetness designations Many countries use the French terminology and adhere to the EU technical requirements for residual sugar: Brut Nature (0-3g/l), Extra-Brut (0-6g/l), Brut (0-15g/l), Extra-Sec (12-20g/l), Sec (17-35g/l), Demi-Sec (35-50g/l) and Doux (50g/l-plus).

Talento (It.) Since March 1996, producers of Italian *méthode champenoise* wines may utilise the new term of "Talento", which has been registered as a trademark by the Instituto Talento Metodo Classico (formerly the Instituto Spumante Classico Italiano). Talento is almost synonymous with the Spanish term Cava, although to be fully compatible it would have to assume the mantle of a DOC.

Tank method Same as *cuve close*.

Tartaric acid The ripe acid of grapes that increases slightly when the grapes increase in sugar during the *véraison*.

Tartrates, tartrate crystals Tartaric acid deposits look like sugar crystals at the bottom of a bottle and this may have been precipitated when a wine has experienced low temperatures. It can also happen naturally deposited through the process of time, although seldom in a still or sparkling wine that has spent several months in contact with its lees, as this produces a mannoprotein called MP32, which prevents precipitation of tartrates. A fine deposit of glittering crystals can also be deposited on the base of a cork if it has been soaked in a sterilizing solution of metabisulphite prior to bottling. Both are harmless.

TCA Short for trichloroanisole, the prime but by no means only culprit responsible for corked wines, TCA is found in oak staves as well as cork. *See* Corked

Terpene Various terpenes and terpene alcohols are responsible for some of the most aromatic characteristics in wine, ranging from the floral aromas of Muscat to the petrol or kerosene character of a wonderfully mature Riesling. In sparkling wine a terpene character may indicate Riesling in the blend, but is more likely to be due to part or all the base wine being kept unduly long in tank prior to second fermentation.

Terroir (Fr.) Literally 'soil', but in a viticultural sense *terroir* refers to the complete growing environment, which also includes altitude, aspect, climate and any other factors that may affect the life of a vine, and the quality of the grapes it produces.

Tête de cuvée (Fr.) The first flow of juice during the pressing, the cream of the cuvée. It is the easiest to extract and the highest in quality with the best balance of acids, sugars and minerals.

Thin A wine lacking in body, fruit and other properties.

Tight A firm wine of good extract that gives the impression of being under tension, as if a wound spring waiting to uncoil, and thus has more obvious potential than either a reticent or a closed wine.

Toast [1] A slow-developing bottle-induced aroma commonly associated with the Chardonnay, but can develop in wines made from other grapes, including red wines. Toasty bottle-aromas are initially noticeable on the aftertaste, often with no indication on the nose. [2] A fast-developing oak-induced aroma. [3] Barrels are toasted during their construction to one of three grades: light or low, medium, and heavy or high.

Traditionelle Klassische (Ger.) See Méthode champenoise.

Transfer method Decanting under pressure from one size bottle to another, not the ideal of méthode champenoise.

Transvasage (Fr.) See Transfer method

Trocken (Ger.) See Sec

Typical An over-used and less than honest form of honest.

Typicity A wine that shows good typicity is one that accurately reflects its grape and soil.

UC Davis Short for the University of California's enology department at Davis.

Ullage (Fr.) [1] The space between the top of the wine and the head of the bottle or cask. An old bottle of wine with an ullage beneath the shoulder of the bottle is unlikely to be any good. [2] The practice of topping up wine in a barrel to keep it full and thereby prevent excessive oxidation.

Undertone Subtle and supporting, not dominating like an overtone. In a fine wine a strong and simple overtone of youth can evolve into a delicate undertone with maturity, adding to a vast array of other nuances that give it complexity.

Ungenerous A wine that lacks generosity has little or no fruit and possibly far too much acidity for a correct and harmonious balance.

Unripe acid Malic acid, as opposed to tartaric, which is ripe acid.

Up-front Suggests an attractive, simple quality immediately recognised, which says it all. The wine may initially be interesting, but there would be no further development and the last glass would say nothing more than the first.

VA Abbreviation of volatile acidity.

VA fruitiness An ultra-fruitiness accentuated by volatile acidity, this can be a positive factor in the description of a wine, but the term VA (for volatile acidity) has such negative connotations that I have used "sprightly fruitiness" so that the casual reader is not put off perfectly acceptable wines.

Value-for-money The difference between penny-saving and penny-pinching. In theory true value-for-money exists at any price-point, whether five or five-hundred (pounds, dollars deutschemarks or whatever), and the decision to buy will depend on how deep your pocket is.

Vanilla See oak

Vanillin The aldehyde that gives vanilla pods their characteristic aroma, vanillin is also found naturally in oak, albeit on a smaller scale.

Varietal The character of a single grape variety as expressed in the wine it produces.

Vendemia (Sp.) Harvest, often used to indicate vintage.

Vertical tasting This is a tasting of different vintages of the same wine, as opposed to an horizontal tasting, which consists of different wines of the same style or vintage.

Vigneron (Fr.) Vineyard worker.

Vignoble (Fr.) Vineyard.

Vin de cuvée (Fr.) Wine made from the first (and best) pressing only.

Vin de garde (Fr.) Wine that is capable of great improvement if left to age.

Vinifera Species covering all varieties of vines providing classic wine-making grapes.

Vinification Far more than simply fermentation, this involves the entire process of making wine, from the moment the grapes are picked to the point it is bottled.

Vin Mousseux (Fr.) Literally means sparkling wine without any connotation of quality one way or the other, but because all fine sparkling wines in France utilise other terms, for all practical purposes it infers a cheap, low quality product.

Vino de aguja (Sp.) A young, slightly sparkling or *perlant* wine.

Vinous Winey, characteristic of wine. When used to describe a wine, it infers basic qualities only.

Vintage The harvest or wine of a single year.

Vivid The fruit in some wines can be so fresh, ripe, clean-cut and expressive that it quickly gives a vivid impression of complete character in the mouth.

Volatile acidity This has a sweet vinegary aroma, and if clearly detectable is usually deemed a fault, but a certain amount of volatile acidity (or VA for short) is essential to the fruitiness of every wine, and occasionally even high levels can be a positive factor. *See* VA fruitiness

Weissherbst (Ger.) A single-variety rosé wine produced from black grapes only. *See* earlier.

Wet straw *See* Straw.

Wg. (Ger.) Abbreviation of Winzergenossenschaft.

Winzersekt (Ger.,) Literally a 'grower Sekt', this can either be the product of a single grower or a cooperative of growers, but must be a Sekt bA.

Yeast A kind of fungus vital in all winemaking. Yeast cells excrete a number of enzymes, some 22 of which are necessary to complete the chain reaction known as fermentation.

Yeast enzymes Each enzyme acts as a catalyst for one activity and is specific for that task and no other in the fermentation process.

Yeasty Not a complimentary term for most wines, but a yeasty bouquet can be desirable in a good-quality sparkling wine, especially when young.

Yield There are two forms of yield: [1] the quantity of grapes produced from a given area of land, [2] how much juice is pressed from it. Wine people in Europe use hl/ha or hectolitres per hectare, which is a combination of both, literally referring to how much juice has been extracted from the grapes harvested from an area of land. This is fine when the amount of juice that can be pressed from grapes is controlled by European-type appellation systems, but in the New World, where this seldom happens, they tend to talk in tons per acre.

Zesty A lively characteristic that suggests a zippy tactile impression combined, maybe, with a hint of citrusy aroma.

Zing, zingy, zip, zippy Terms all indicative of something refreshing, lively and vital, resulting from a high balance of ripe fruit acidity.

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