

**MAY 2007**

## **Champagne, The drink of all seasons**

### **A NOBLE and HISTORIC DRINK**

Champagne is the immigrating and erotic bubbly, the undisputed quality sparkling wine, from Louis XV to the Czars, from Churchill to the English Royal Family and for all the days with a Y. Unlike any other wine, it has established its appellation as a brand name with which the greatest prestige and the highest price!

Champagne production represents around 10% of all the sparkling wine produced in the world. Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century only the kings were allowed to drink champagne by the bottle, Louis XV was the first to have bottle of champagne shipped to Normandy when he went to visit his mistress Mme De Pompadour. In those days lots of barrels of wine from champagne were shipped across the channel and then stored

In Tower Bridge, then distributed in the salon of the London Café Society, and today UK is the biggest Champagne consumer in Europe.

The Monk Dom Pérignon was at the cornerstone of the development of Champagne method, as the famous cellar master of the Abbey of Hautvilliers. He did not invent Champagne in its present form but he was the pioneer in the choice of grape varieties (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier), his vineyard techniques and the art of blending cuvées from different vineyard, He was also the first to press true white wine from black grapes (Pinot Noir), he introduced the use of stronger bottles with corks tied down with a metal string (which could withstand greater pressure, which made it possible to supply and export Champagne).

It was the cellar master of the Veuve Clicquot who first invented Remuage and the exact dose of “ liqueur de tirage” for the second fermentation which advanced production to industrial level, from then on the name of Veuve Clicquot, Moët & Chandon, Ruinart, Krug, Bollinger, Deutz, ...have become the elite of champagne today.

In the second Millennium year the Group (L.V.M.H) which owns Veuve Clicquot, Krug, Pommery, Ruinart, Moët & Chandon & Canard-Duchêne sold over 300 millions bottles of champagne.

Champagne is always something special and it should be treated as such, so that it can meet all expectations. Basically there is appropriate Champagne for every occasion and every dish, no other wine has such a broad range. By mixing grape varieties, wine from different vineyards and different vintages, as well as altering dosage, each Champagne producer (there are 1800 champagne House today) has the opportunity to bestow each “cuvée” with its own personal character, from slim to corpulent, fruity & flowery, fresh and mature, sweet and very dry, Brut and Vintage Champagne, and of course there are the fine and ordinary, the harmonious and coarse, expensive and cheap ones.

### The Different Champagne Style

- **Non Vintage (N/V)**

This style is blended across different vintages (usually three), this is where the style of the house is represented and account for 75% of Champagne produced.

- **Vintage**

This is made entirely from one year's harvest, so it will only be made on a particularly good year.

- **Rosé**

Non-Vintage or vintage, these wines are made by blending a little red wine (made from pinot Noir) with white wine. Most Rosé Champagne has a higher percentage of red grapes in the blend to help marry the tastes together.

- **Blanc de Blancs**

This style can also be Non -Vintage or Vintage and as the name suggests, it is made entirely from 100% Chardonnay grapes.

- **Prestigious Cuvées**

These styles of wine are usually vintage wines selected from the finest vineyards i.e.: cuvée Dom Perignon, cuvee Louise Pommery, Cuvee William Deutz, Cuvee Winston Churchill (from Pol Roger), La Grande Dame from Veuve Clicquot, R de ruinart

My Choice of Champagne:

Veuve Clicquot Vintage 1999 £31.50 per bottle  
Vineyard wine direct 01189 574044

Deutz brut N/V £19.50 per bottle  
[www.berkmann.co.uk](http://www.berkmann.co.uk)

Ruinart Blanc de Blancs £26.95 per bottle  
Vineyard wine direct 01189 574044

Veuve Clicquot Rose Vintage 2000 £33.50 per bottle  
Vineyard wine direct 01189 574044

**Xavier Le-Bellégo**  
**Forbury's restaurant**