

WINE News

Culinary inspirations from our intrepid Champagne team.



FEBRUARY 12, 2018 FEATURES

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What Champagne Brings to the Table

By Gary Westby

Champagne paired with food is a winning combination twelve months of the year. The fantastic crisp acidity of the wine, combined with its sneaky concentration, makes it work with foods that other wines can't handle—even very spicy foods. The classic pairings are too many to list, and go not only from caviar to foie gras, but also from potato chips to fried chicken. In this Champagne-themed newsletter, we will explore the intersection of food and the world's great sparkling wine with recipes as well as ideas for takeout. It is a great treat for all of us, whenever we need a little something to look forward to.

Our guest writer, Mr. Shaun Green, reports on a recipe that the Bonville family sent from Avize; Scotty explores pairings with Laurent-Perrier; Diana grabs sushi to go with a handful of Michel Arnould bottles; and Alex fires up the barbecue to go with some Egrot. As for me, I won't be getting any hazard pay for trying the newest edition of Krug's Grande Cuvée, the 165th, with truffle-infused salt cod brandade. I hope that these diligently reported stories will inspire you to try some new culinary combinations with your Champagne. Please send me your favorites at garywestby@klwines.com. I am always hungry!

Gilbert Jacquesson "Cuvée Tradition" Blanc de Noirs Brut Champagne (\$24.99)

This 100% Pinot Meunier Champagne comes from estate vineyards in the heart of Troissy. It has great aromas of pie crust, toast, and a little pear-like fruit, as well as a nice bead from three years of aging on the lees. I love Meunier Champagne like this, with its flavor nuances of mushroom—and this is a spectacular bottle to pair with some truffle popcorn or fries!



Louis Brochet 1er Cru Brut Champagne (\$29.99) Brochet is among the few grower-producers that we import who has a diploma of oenology, the equivalent of a master's degree in winemaking. His polished, classy Champagnes come from estate vineyards on the Petite Montagne of Reims, famous for Pinot Noir. Composed of 80% Pinot Noir, 15% Chardonnay and 5% Meunier, this wine goes spectacularly well with smoked salmon or trout appetizers, as the Pinot plays very well with these flavors.



Arthur Marc "Initiale Noir & Blanc" Brut Champagne (\$29.99) This crisp, refreshing Champagne comes from the estate vineyards of twelfth-generation grower Patrice Marc in Fleury-la-Rivière, perhaps the prettiest village in Champagne. It is composed of half each Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and does not go through malolactic fermentation. This keeps the wine very lively and vivacious and it is an ideal partner for fried foods, going magically with everything from fish and chips to falafel.



Champagne Franck Bonville: Not Just for Toasting!

By Shaun Green

One of the great benefits of working in the wine business is the chance to taste through a huge number of wines and experience wonderful food pairings—sometimes pairings that truly surprise.

Champagne is one of the easiest pairings with food, yet one of the most overlooked when choosing a dinner wine. While we often think of Champagne for festive occasions, the amazing versatility of Champagne in food pairings begs for inclusion in any great meal.

Champagne Franck Bonville is an exciting grower-producer of Grand Cru Champagne from Avize, Oger and Le Mesnil. The pricing on their Champagnes is amazing, giving most anyone the ability to taste fabulous Grand Cru Champagne on even modest budgets. In their family since 1900, the property is now managed by their fourth generation, Olivier Bonville, who has introduced sustainable viticultural practices and a modern take on classic Champagne. The range of Champagnes from this producer is also impressive for a small grower-producer, considering the insane amount of time and work it takes to tend these Champagnes from vine right up to the supplying of our wine shop.

Franck Bonville provided a lovely suggested pairing with the **Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs (\$34.99)**. A crab and lobster aspic (recipe below) with scallop carpaccio is a wonderfully rich and elegant dish to complement this stunning BdB. Feel free to experiment with other ingredients focusing on the richness of the seafood aspic—the basics of the pairing would remain the same. **91 WE**

A favorite pairing of mine with the **Franck Bonville “Prestige” Brut Blanc de Blancs (\$44.99)** is salmon baked in foil, stuffed with lemon and dill. The richness of the salmon (we use the Weber to slowly cook the salmon) and the simple addition of lemon and dill pair seamlessly with the full body of the Prestige. **92 WS**

The **Franck Bonville “Belles Voyes” Brut Blanc de Blancs (\$69.99)** is fantastic for pairing with Japanese cuisine: sushi, of course, but also grilled fish and other richer dishes. Hawaiian-style tuna poke works for the same reason. The more intense character of the Belles Voyes dances elegantly with these. **91 WS**

The **Franck Bonville Brut Rosé Champagne (\$39.99)** makes a fantastic accompaniment with an herbed, roast chicken. The richer, bolder red fruit character can handle relatively hearty foods that would pair with still Pinot. It's a great way to take a wonderful, classic meal and up the elegance just a bit. **92 WS**

Keep in mind that flutes or coupes are not necessarily the best choice for serving Champagne. A more rounded glass, something you would think of for a still white wine, works ideally. The broad surface releases the aromatics of the Champagne and the slight tapering at the



rim helps to concentrate them. Feel free to experiment with different glassware and choose the one that you prefer—throw the “rules” out the window and have some fun by including the sparkling queen of wines in your week, Champagne.

Lobster and Crab Aspic—Scallop Carpaccio with Argan Oil

For 4 persons:

- 4 scallops
- 200 gr lobster meat (just short of 1/2 pound)
- 200 gr crab meat (just short of 1/2 pound)
- 120 gr vegetables (peppers, carrots, eggplant, zucchini) (1/4 pound)
- 100 ml food jelly (gelatin, 3.4 oz)
- White Martini (white Vermouth)
- 4 tomatoes
- 1 lemon
- Parsley
- White balsamic vinegar
- ¼ mango
- Olive oil
- Argan oil (a specialty oil used in Moroccan cooking, or use another nut oil)
- Salt, pepper, aromatic herbs

Vinaigrette: Mix balsamic vinegar (for the color), lemon, argan oil and herbs. Add salt.

Vinaigrette for presentation: Soften a part of the vinaigrette with a coulis of mango.

Vegetables: Cut vegetables into mirepoix (small regular cubes) and cook them separately in olive oil. Season. Keep them crunchy. A similar cut of all the vegetables will help with even cooking.

Aspic: Cook lobster and crab in stock. Cool and remove the lobster and crab meat. Add some vegetables. Heat the gelatin with vermouth to bring acidity. Season. Fill silicone molds with meat, add vegetables and pour warm gelatin and chill at least 12 hours in the fridge.

Scallop carpaccio: Wash and dry the scallops and cut them in thin slices.

Presentation: Present the aspic decorated with a tomato flower and fennel leaf. Put 3 or 4 scallop slices with parsley to make a contrast. Sprinkle with herbs and finish with some lemon zest.



It's a Wrap: Late-Night Sushi with Champagne Michel Arnould

By Diana Turk

Champagne usually occupies a glamorous culinary position next to caviar and canapés, or is simply poured solo for wedding toasts, romantic dinners, and New Year's Eve. But once we've rung in 2018 and are back to hectic schedules and healthy resolutions, sparkling often falls out of favor. While it shines in those celebratory situations, there's no need to relegate it to parties: Champagne goes with everything! Its bright acid and leesy complexity is a killer pairing with Asian food, especially sushi. Take the white-wine-with-fish "rule" and turn up the volume with vivid Champagne. I put this to the test by pairing the Direct Import wines of Michel Arnould with late-night sushi. I was tired and hungry, so I picked up a platter on the way home from work and hoped for a simple night. In the process, I inadvertently had the most luxurious meal since the holidays!

The Arnoulds own 27 acres in Verzenay, a commune in the Marne department of Champagne and the northernmost of the Grand Cru villages. Their Pinot-dominant wines are masculine and expressive, sourced from vines aged 45–50 years. And the quality is unbelievable for the price—a welcome point since I was shelling out for omakase.

Showing clear lemon fruit on the nose, with a stream of salinity through the finish, the current **Michel Arnould Extra Brut (\$39.99)** is based on the 2010 harvest, a vintage celebrated for creating more linear Champagne. Although this is 100% Pinot Noir, and Blanc de Blancs is typically a more favored suggestion for fish, the Extra Brut was a natural with sashimi, especially yellowtail and snapper, which benefitted from the sharper acid and low dosage.

Another bonus: the crisp yet easy-drinking style of the Extra Brut (it is still berry-scented Pinot Noir) not only worked with the food, but served as a perfect aperitif—a win-win if you're not-so-patiently waiting for delivery.

Bright cherry fruit really comes through on the nose of the **Michel Arnould "Reserve" Brut (\$32.99)** which lent an almost Northwest vibe when paired with salmon. Although it has the structure and that hallmark toastiness unique to Verzenay fruit, this was a more crowd-pleasing option, with a refreshing finish.

Michel Arnould "Grand Cuvée" Brut (\$39.99) is the creamiest of the lineup, featuring a hazelnut quality throughout while finishing crisp. Although not technically a vintage release, this is from the warmer 2009, making it instantly accessible, with graceful lift yet weighty texture. The finish is very dry, balancing with the richness and bright fruit of the palate. North-facing slopes in Verzenay ripen Pinot Noir beautifully but maintain a snap of acidity that went well with albacore and halibut sushi, and that raciness cut through anything with ponzu sauce. This was perhaps my favorite combination, which surprised me given the Grand Cuvée's rounder mouthfeel, but the decadent texture of both the Champagne and the fish elevated an easy Thursday night option into an extraordinary experience...despite the fact that I was eating it on my couch!



Krug's Ingredient of the Year: Fish!

By Gary Westby

The fabulously vinous Champagnes of Krug have always been a favorite treat for me, especially paired with food. I have been anticipating the release of the **Krug "Grande Cuvée" 165 Ème Édition Brut Champagne (\$159.99)**, which includes wines spanning nineteen years, from 1990 to 2009. Every year, Krug partners with chefs around the world on a special ingredient to pair with their Champagne. Last year it was mushrooms, this year it is fish. While they don't yet have all of their inspirations on fish up on their website, last year's mushroom piece is something to see. My wife Cinnamon and I decided to try a fish pairing ourselves, and settled on salt cod brandade with truffle butter and pain grille.

I am happy to report that it was a huge success. The 165th edition is a very racy and bright Krug, with seven years on the lees giving it perfect texture and an almost impossibly tiny bead. It is super long-finishing and very complex, especially with rich food to set it off. I found the buttered, grilled bread spread with brandade brought out the subtle toasty elements of the Champagne, while the truffle savor and complexity mirrored the complexity of the Krug perfectly.

We drew a lot of inspiration from a number of recipes, especially the Serious Eats version. Our own innovation was to add a three-ounce tub of black truffle butter during the emulsification of the olive oil



into the flakey cod. It is critical to rinse the fish thoroughly a day ahead, and to give the cod at least three changes of water during its 24 hours of soaking to remove excess salt. I also feel that the bread is a very important part of what makes this dish work so well with the barrel-fermented, long-aged Krug. We chose Manresa Bread's Levain, which I buttered with Beurre d'Isigny and grilled on both sides in a grill pan. I hope you will find an occasion and treat yourself to this decadent pairing. It is a treat!

Toast to the Bird: Egrot Grand Cru with Spicy Chicken BBQ

By Alex Shroeder

I love the power and grace of the high-caliber, Pinot Noir-dominant Egrot cuvées. Elisabeth and Jean-Marie Egrot have been making great Champagne for years in the Grand Cru village of Ay, and Elisabeth hails from the famous Goutourbe family, bringing generations of renowned expertise to the operation.

Pinot-based Champagnes allow food pairings that are a bit bolder than Chardonnay, and I chose to take advantage of that with spicy barbecued chicken, marinated overnight in a mix of olive oil, beer, cayenne pepper, pepper, salt, honey and parsley. Cut in half, I roasted it for half an hour over medium coals, meat side down, then flipped it over and finished the job after another 20 minutes. I served it with homemade cole slaw and Southern-style lima beans, with spicy barbecue sauce on the side.

The Egrot Brut Champagne (\$34.99) offers value unbeaten in its category. The nonvintage Brut is 80% Pinot Noir from the Grand Cru of Ay and 20% Chardonnay from Premier Cru Louvois. The spices of the smoky grilled chicken with barbecue sauce complemented the stone fruit, apple and honeyed brioche flavors of the Champagne perfectly. The acidity was intense enough to cut through the rich chicken while creating a complex and integrated flavor extravaganza in my mouth. I thought, it doesn't get any better, does it?



But then I tried the 2009. The 2009 Egrot Brut Champagne (\$39.99) is made entirely from Grand Cru Ay fruit, two-thirds Pinot Noir and one-third Chardonnay from a vintage renowned for the ripeness and power of its fruit. The fruit was so ripe that no dosage was necessary to create perfect balance between

the natural acidity and the richness of the fruit of that particular vintage, with true Grand Cru minerality to match it all.

In the end, after much debate, we decided that the 2009 was ultimately the better pairing with the spicy barbecued chicken—but I may need to try again just to make sure.

Laurent-Perrier: Classic Selections from a Classic Champagne House

By Scott Beckerley

I have long been a fan of this producer due to the wonderful quality and the fine bead and acidity of the wines. Last year, Laurent-Perrier upgraded their nonvintage brut to the Laurent-Perrier “La Cuvée” Brut Champagne (187ml \$12.99; 375ml \$17.99; 750ml \$39.99; 1.5L \$74.99). A significant uptick in the quality of this blend, it is creamy, with stone fruits and very bright acidity. The citrus finish works well with fried foods! A popular surprise at one of our last Champagne tastings was the Laurent-Perrier Ultra Brut Champagne (\$54.99). The LP version of ultra brut isn't just teeth-chattering acidity, but a balance of green fruits (lime, apple and pear) and fresh, vibrant minerality. I have had it with shrimp and squid ceviche and it was just great! A new release, the 2007 Laurent-Perrier Vintage Brut (750ml \$54.99; 1.5L \$124.99) is



a worthy followup to the 2006, but more subdued, with white stone fruits, pineapple and apricot. With lovely cream flavors and that lingering LP finish, this will work very well with grilled whitefish with lemon and light curry butter. A huge hit with customers, the Laurent-Perrier “Cuvée Rosé” Brut Rosé Champagne (750ml \$69.99; 1.5L \$149.99) is all about the cherry fruit. It is quite rich and shows integrated spice and orange marmalade flavors, along with signature cream and finesse. Tempting to have as a starter, but I would actually like to serve it with a grilled lean steak with soy-based marinade. Although I am not much of a dessert guy (I much prefer the cheese cart!), I would have the Laurent-Perrier Demi-Sec Harmony Champagne (\$34.99), which isn't too sweet, with walnuts drizzled with honey and a nice, creamy and not too pungent bleu cheese. A touch of honey and spice livens up the pear and orange flavors.

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