

WINE News

*Champagne for summer days
and summer weddings.*



JUNE 5, 2017 FEATURES

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The New and Old Classic Champagne of Summer

By Gary Westby

The wedding season calls for Champagne. And we have it for you here at K&L! If you want a delicious value from a small grower or a blue chip from a Grand Marque, we have you covered. My favorite choice for a wedding gift is the **K&L Champagne Club**, a two bottle shipment (you can also pick it up at one of the stores) every other month for a total of 12 bottles a year at just \$69.99 a shipment. The strong dollar, combined with the buying power of more than 700 members, allows me to put some great stuff in the club. This month it is two vintage wines, the 2012 Franck Bonville “Millesime” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne and the 2010 Ariston Aspasié Brut Champagne. My goal with this club is to tour the region, explore the different combinations of grape

varieties, dive into the different styles of Champagne and showcase all the different kinds of producers. I think that any bride and groom will find a reason to celebrate 12 times a year. If not for them, then for you!

I have been asked hundreds of times by customers for recommendations on good books and resources for learning about Champagne. While almost all the books are mostly just lists of tasting notes, I now have an online resource I can heartily recommend. The Comité Champagne has a great website, www.champagnecampus.com, as well as a great app for your phone by the same name. I have learned a lot from using it and I think you will too!

Ariston Aspasié “Carte Blanche” Brut

Champagne (\$27.99) For nearly 20 years, this has been the number one wedding Champagne at K&L. All estate grown, this is composed of 40% Chardonnay, 30% Meunier and 30% Pinot Noir and given five years of aging on the lees. With plenty of richness and brioche character to grab guests at the toast, this is also refreshing enough to drink all night!



Laurent-Perrier Brut Champagne (\$34.99)

Our finest value in Grand Marque Champagne and a fantastic bottle for any wedding. This is composed of 50% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir and 15% Meunier from 100 crus and aged for three years on the lees. It has subtle sourdough toast aromas, a very fine, precise bead and an elegant, restrained impression on the palate. **90 RP**



Boulevard-Bauquaire “Trepail” Brut Blanc de Blancs Vieilles Vignes

Champagne (\$39.99) This show-stopping, all-Chardonnay Champagne comes from one plot planted over 70 years ago in the Premier Cru of Trepail. It has a tiny bead, subtle bread aromas and marvelously complex flavors for anyone who wants to pay attention. The bright, chalk-driven finish will make you want another glass, so you might need to get extra if you choose this one!



Bollinger: A Love Affair with Pinot Noir in Aÿ

By Scott Beckerley

While Champagne Bollinger has been producing wines since 1829, they came to my attention comparatively more recently in a Bond film—*Goldeneye*, to be exact. Pierce Brosnan flirted with Famke Janssen (Xenia Onatopp) while racing her in his Aston Martin down a twisting road. To calm his fellow passenger, a psychiatrist who is evaluating him, he shows her an in-vehicle refrigerated bottle of Bollinger Grande Année 1988. Presumably, they are going to consume it after they pull off the road. It was an exciting and fun introduction to both Bollinger and the future Jean Grey. Since that movie, I pay attention and try to find Bollinger in the newer movies, as well as watching the older ones. The latest film, *Spectre*, gives a tempting preview of the renowned 2002 R.D. When we receive special “Bond” bottlings from Bollinger, they sell out almost immediately.

On May 4, I was happily invited to a sit-down blind tasting of Bollinger vin clair 2016, as well as a flight of blending samples of 2008 Aÿ, an experimental Pinot Noir Champagne vinified and aged in different sizes of barrels and stainless steel. The final flight was a tasting of the 2005 and 2007 releases of Grande Année, one of which has become a new obsession for me—more on that later. Champagne Bollinger has five “pillars” to their approach to winemaking: their vineyards (405 acres of mostly Grand and Premier Cru), the Pinot Noir grape (60% minimum in all blends), barrel fermentation (100% of vintage wines and minimum 30% in non-vintage wines), aging on the cork (reserve stock magnums, used for non-vintage blends and vintage releases, require disgorgement by hand) and lastly, time. Lots of it! French law dictates 15 months aging for non-vintage blends and Bollinger averages 24–36 months for their blends! Bollinger’s non-vintage and vintage selections are some of the most matured in all of Champagne. Speaking of which, the outstanding non-vintage **Bollinger “Special Cuvée” Brut Champagne (\$59.99)** is at once rich and zesty, with very fine acidity. You may remember this wine as historically being big and rich. The style has changed somewhat to include an integrated minerality and spice. It still retains that signature creaminess, so one can have the best of both worlds with this Champagne. **93 JS, 92 WS**

The non-vintage **Bollinger Brut Rosé Champagne (\$69.99)** has been the real surprise over the past few years. Finely textured, with a generous, creamy mousse, it also serves up bright red fruits, raspberry and strawberry, with a hint of white stone fruits and clean earth. Long, long, long finish with generous minerality and chalk. Now on to the Grande Années—they could not be more different. The **2005 Bollinger “Grande Année” Brut Champagne (750ml \$99.99; 1.5L \$249.00)**, despite the extremely low dosage of six grams per liter, is rich and toasty, with crème brûlée, white stone fruits, yellow apple and well-rounded oaky notes. Toast and just a hint of chalk are evident on the finish. **94 WS**



Cyril Delarue (foreground) the sixth generation of the Bollinger family, and Denis Bunner, the deputy cellar master at Bollinger.

On the other hand, the **2007 Bollinger “Grande Année” Brut Champagne (\$99.99)**, although it has more dosage (seven grams per liter), is much higher in acidity, with a white floral nose and restrained apple fruit. It displays oak at the forefront, with yellow fruits and fresh peaches, fleshes out mid-palate, and has that absolutely mindblowing bright acidity on the finish. An extremely distinct set of siblings, equally likable for their different personalities. Also available is the **2005 Bollinger “Grande Année” Rosé Champagne (\$179.00)** which has deep, dark cherries, cream, a nice undertone of citrus and savory spices on the finish. A fantastic candidate for those of you who are collectors out there, as it will cellar extremely well. **96 JS**



I am not sure if we will have any left by the time this article is published, but I feel that it is only right to mention the **2012 Bollinger “La Côte aux Enfants” Still Champagne (\$149.99)**. It is just too interesting to pass up. For King Henri IV, the Pinot Noirs from the town of Aÿ were the most popular wines of the French court. The La Côte aux Enfants comes from a steep hillside plot just outside Aÿ. The 2012 release has dark strawberry and dark cherry fruit with generous acidity and a bit of mushroom. Rich, long finish. Will pair well with beef, lamb and game bird. It is very possible that we may have the 2013 vintage soon—it is also delicious, with higher acidity and more of a red currant character and lively spiciness. Either vintage is worth having and allows us to taste a bit of history from the days when Champagne was renowned for its still wines. It is difficult not to be impressed with Bollinger’s history, wines, or winemaking methods, as I had the pleasure of being reminded at this May tasting.

Enjoy, and Happy Father’s Day!

Pierre Paillard Champagne: Expressions of Bouzy

By Alex Schroeder

Deep in the heart of Champagne, nestled on the southern face of the Montagne de Reims, lies a tiny Grand Cru village called Bouzy. Right in the middle of this village of vineyards sits the Champagne house Pierre Paillard, where Antoine Paillard is the eighth generation of his family to till the soils of Bouzy and work its vines. It's hard to imagine anyone knowing the land and its winegrowing potential better than the Paillards, who craft some of the best terroir-oriented wines in all of Champagne.

They use 22 sustainably farmed parcels of vines around the village to source their non-vintage cuvée **Pierre Paillard “Les Parcelles” Bouzy Grand Cru Extra Brut Champagne (\$48.99)**, a blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. It has such vibrant and intense honeyed stone fruit, floral and citrus flavors, it's hard to believe it's only dosed at 3.5 grams per liter. It's got a fine but vibrant mousse and an acidity that gives way to a long and satisfying, mineral-laden finish. **90 RP**

The first of Paillard's single vintage, single vineyard, single varietal Champagnes is called **2010 Pierre Paillard “Les Mottes” Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$69.99)** and comes from a parcel of Chardonnay vines planted in 1961. Dosed at an extra-brut level of 1.8 grams per liter, the Grand Cru fruit still puts on an impressive display of power and complexity, with citrus, orchard fruit and floral notes that are great against the crisp chalkiness and pair perfectly with freshly shucked oysters. **92 RP**



Antoine Paillard offers his wines in Bouzy.

2010 Pierre Paillard “Les Maillerettes” Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Noirs Champagne (\$69.99) is perhaps Paillard's quintessential expression of Bouzy, which is well known for its powerful Pinot Noir. The power and complexity from old vines are evident in this 2010 Blanc de Noirs, which is drawn entirely from a half-acre parcel of Pinot Noir that was planted in the early 1970s. It has richly textured red fruit, honey, melon and spice flavors with a super-low dosage and a nearly eternal finish. **92 VN**

Bonville: A Perennial Favorite, Still Full of Surprises

By Diana Turk

Direct Import producer Franck Bonville's beautifully crafted wines are not only a perennial favorite at K&L, but they are secret weapon Champagnes for weddings. Value-oriented but elegant and substantial, they share the hallmarks of bigger houses: Grand Cru vineyards, celebrated terroir and noted vintage releases, but the similarities stop just short of the price tag. Not only do these charmers overdeliver, but the offerings are so versatile.

Franck Bonville “Belles Voyes” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$69.99) Whether you're the happy couple searching for a bottle worthy of your head table or a guest looking for a generous gift, Belles Voyes should be on your radar. The perfect celebratory investment, this release is sourced exclusively from the already accessible 2009 harvest and is 100% Chardonnay from Bonville's tiniest vineyard in Oger. Belles Voyes easily outshines exponentially more expensive options, showing apple brightness and intense floral aromatics, plus leesy complexity, brioche notes and a heady, indulgent texture balanced by racy chalk.

Franck Bonville Brut Rosé Champagne (\$39.99) Something pink for a fountain display? This was an actual request I fielded at the Hollywood store, and Bonville's delicate, visually stunning brut rosé was the right answer. With 8% Pinot Noir from the celebrated Grand

Cru village of Ambonny, this crisp rosé features vivid red fruit on the nose but finishes fresh, with the linear snap expected of 92% Chardonnay, mostly from the colder 2011 vintage. There is electric acidity on the palate but also a plusher component thanks to the luxuriously fine bead.

2009 Franck Bonville “Millesime” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$49.99) This is the dark horse in the lineup. It's sophisticated, with a steely backbone, yet soft enough for non-Champagne drinkers to appreciate long after the toast. Yeasty, with caramel notes right from the top, Millesime showcases the house's mineral-driven style, with the added drinkability of a rich, easygoing vintage. While the additional time on the lees (surprising even Bonville—this was accidentally left in the cellar for an extra two years!) comes through, this still a bright blanc de blancs with tiny mousse, lemon and green apple fruit, and a clean yet lingering finish. This magical Champagne will elevate expectations of how special your celebration can be. One of our recent customers was a bride who was looking for a practical option for her courthouse wedding. She wasn't sure the occasion warranted “special” Champagne, and worried her \$50 budget would resign her to something less than spectacular. We pointed her towards this gem.



Paul Fallet in the Clos du Mont.

Fallet-Dart: Historic Champagne of Drachy

By Gary Westby

The Fallet family has been growing grapes in Champagne since at least 1611, and probably long before that. I have never visited a grower with an estate so loaded with history, and history is something the Champagne region does not lack! On their property is one of the first Christian churches to be built after the conversion of Clovis and his crowning as Holy Roman Emperor: the Eglise de Drachy and the Clos du Mont, the walled vineyard of

the same church. They date from about 740. Paul Fallet, the seventeenth generation, now oversees farming the 47-acre estate and the production of about 170,000 bottles of Champagne a year.

The jewel of their estate is the 12-acre Clos du Mont. This site is recognized as a clos, but only has one wall left, as the rest was destroyed in shelling in World War I. It is humbling to see such history up close—the entirety of Champagne was an awful battlefield 100 years ago. But when a site has been a clos for almost 1,200 years, a century short of three walls is only a moment! The Clos du Mont is where most of their Chardonnay is planted, and also where their top wine is made.

Paul and his family are not rushed when it comes to making the wine. Even their basic Champagne is treated to four years on the lees, and their top wine more than 10. Everything they make is all-estate grown. As a group, they are rich, toasty and complex wines with lots of personality. If you like your Champagne with plenty of lees character and depth, they are very much worth your attention.

I am very happy to offer the Fallet-Dart “Grande Selection” Brut Champagne in three sizes. We have regular bottles (\$34.99), halves (\$17.99) and magnums (\$69.99). The current batch is based on 2008, with 40% reserves from 2007 and 2006. It is composed of 70% Pinot Noir, 15% Meunier and 15% Chardonnay. This fabulously well-aged Champagne is a good choice for fans of Bollinger and Krug looking for something estate-grown and more reasonably priced. The high-quality toast of long aging and the cherry flavors of the Pinot are in perfect harmony here.

The Fallet-Dart Grand Reserve Brut Champagne (\$29.99) is a fantastic value. It is a blanc de noirs, composed of 60% Meunier and 40% Pinot Noir aged for over four years on the lees. I love the spiced pear, pie crust and black cherry that the open-knit aroma gives so generously. This Champagne is broad on the palate and does not have an austere bone in its body.

If the 2008 Fallet-Dart Vintage Brut Champagne (\$39.99) is sold out when you get this newsletter, please put yourself on the waiting list and I will do my best to get more. This Champagne is composed of 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir, and is as electric as it is toasty and decadent. I think it is the most exciting vintage Champagne that we have in the store right now, and given how well the 1999 vintage tasted next to it, I am sure it will last a long time.

Their top wine, the Fallet-Dart “Clos du Mont” Brut Champagne (\$79.99) is composed of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir from the 2002 and 1999 vintages and has been aged for over 12 years on the lees. We drank this next to the 2002 Krug “Clos du Mesnil” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne, 2006 Philipponnat “Clos de Goisses” Brut Champagne and the 1999 Billecart-Salmon “Le Clos Saint-Hilaire” Brut Blanc de Noirs Champagne at last year’s Champagne staff summit. It was our second favorite!



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