

CUTTING EDGE

SELECTIONS



Champagne
Portfolio



Champagne Ayala

The “Sleeping Beauty of Champagne” Awakens

The story of Champagne Ayala is told in four acts. Founded in 1860 by Edmond de Ayala, the brand quickly became one of the most popular among the British aristocracy. This rapid success is attributed primarily to low level of dosage, which produces a wine of refinement and elegance. This Ayala-style of Champagne continues through to the present day.

This era of success ended during the Winegrowers’ Revolt of 1911, when rioters destroyed the property and could have ended the history of Ayala. The Ayala family showed remarkable foresight and was insured against riots and vandalism. By 1913, Ayala had been rebuilt in a stunning Art Deco design.

The period from 1913 until the start of World War Two was a glorious one for Champagne Ayala. The wines were darlings of the bohemian cafés and clubs of Paris and London and production increased to over one million bottles per year.

Champagne Ayala was also official supplier to the royal courts of England and Spain. The grandeur of that period is also exemplified by the rich iconography that the House inspired: the numerous advertising posters and artistic drawings from the era are the best testimonies of that splendor.

After the war, Champagne Ayala became a period of quiet decline that would last sixty years and wouldn’t end until it was purchased by Champagne Bollinger in 2005.

Under new ownership and with the immensely talented Caroline Latrive as winemaker, Champagne Ayala has reestablished itself as a leader in elegant, low-dosage, Champagne. Latrive, one of only 3 female cellar masters in Champagne, has blazed a path in pushing for some of the smallest lot-by-lot vinifications in Champagne, always in search of refining the detail and complexity of her Champagne.





Billecart-Salmon

The Oldest Continuously Owned and Operated Champagne House

The Billecart family has been living in Mareuil-sur-Ay since the 16th century. When Nicolas Francois Billecart married Elisabeth Salmon in the early 1800s the two families' long held vineyards were married as well, leading Nicolas to leave his law practice and take over the family wine estate. In 1818 he founded the house of Billecart-Salmon, which now stands as the oldest continuously family owned and operated house in Champagne. It is currently managed by the seventh generation, brothers Francois and Antoine Roland-Billecart.

Most of Billecart-Salmon's fruit comes from a small vineyard holding, though this is supplemented with grapes bought in from the Marne Valley and the Montagne de Reims. Meticulous production techniques, from the use of their own cultured yeast to its long, slow, cool fermentation, ensure that the family has 100 percent control of production.

In the 1970s, Jean Roland-Billecart decided once again to work on a champagne which had long been considered second class: a Brut Rosé. His objective was to create a champagne which was very pale in color and whose flavor is distinguished by its freshness and subtle notes of red berries. The gamble paid off and the Brut Rosé Non-Vintage has since become the House's flagship cuvée. It globally revered as one of the world's greatest Rosé Champagnes.

As of 2001, Billecart-Salmon moved their winemaking into a brand new facility that they believe to be the most technically advanced in Champagne. The intricate and precise nature of Francois Domi's winemaking demanded that the family use every available resource to create the perfect environment for the production of these truly stellar champagnes. The ability to perform as many as 75 micro-fermentations simultaneously allows M. Domi the luxury of keeping many of his parcels separate until the blending phase.

Overall, production levels are modest and many of Billecart-Salmon's prestige cuvées are highly allocated.





CHAMPAGNE
BOLLINGER

MAISON FONDÉE EN 1829



Champagne Bollinger

Guardian of the Artisanal Past. Beacon of the Future

Bollinger is an icon in Champagne, all the more remarkable because its reputation rests entirely on the quality of its extraordinarily distinct Champagnes. The rigorous, obsessive attention to detail and preservation of artisanal, almost absurdly labor-intensive practices, makes Bollinger both a guardian of the past and, as we see with each passing year, the beacon of the future.

Each and every detail at Bollinger represents a quest for a certain form of perfection. Known around the world for powerful, polished Champagnes that are among the greatest of both Non-Vintage and Vintage Champagnes produced, any of the fundamentals to their approach and production would be special, but when taken altogether are utterly unique.

First, the Bollinger vineyards cover 405 acres, most of which are classified as Grand or Premier Cru, and provide roughly two-thirds of the house's needs. Decades ago, Bollinger wrote a quality charter that stated their own vineyard must account for at a minimum 60% of their production.

Secondly, no producer is as associated with a single grape in Champagne as Bollinger with Pinot Noir. The most demanding grape variety to grow in the region, it forms the backbone of Bollinger's luscious style, making up around 60% of plantings and always 60% or more of each Champagne.

Thirdly, Bollinger is the only remaining producer in the region with its own cooperage, and keeps a stock of 3,000 oak barrels for fermenting the base wines for its Non Vintage and Vintage wines. Their single cooper, an important link to historical knowledge, does not make any new barrels, rather spends his time fixing barrels, many of which are over 60 years of age.

Fourthly, Bollinger stores its reserve wines to blend into their Non Vintage cuvées in magnum bottles, an incredibly labor-intensive process that no one today undertakes. It requires opening by hand all the magnums to blend into the Non Vintage wines, crazy work that takes a team of 7 a full month to complete every year.

Lastly, all Vintage wines are aged under cork, and not under a crown capsule (like a soda capsule). This requires that every Bollinger vintage bottle bottle is hand-riddled, and then hand disgorged.

Again, an unthinkable amount of work.





Champagne Collet

Champagne's Oldest Cooperative. Centered on Gastronomy.

As the oldest and 4th largest cooperative, the history of Champagne Collet is inextricably bound to the modern history of the Champagne region. Champagne Collet's history harkens back to the Revolt Champenoise that began in 1911 with the revolt resulting in the establishment of Champagne as an appellation to counter fraudulent production.

Champagne Collet was founded in 1921 and today produces an extraordinary 8 million bottles of Champagne, most of which are sold in Europe and the UK under other labels.

Champagne Collet releases five hundred thousand bottles under its own label, creating regionally distinctive champagnes that are centered in gastronomy. Collet has longstanding partnerships with the Academie Culinaire de France, and Gault & Millau (the famous French guide of gastronomy). These collaborations provide ongoing high profile event opportunities around the world, creating lasting relationships with Michelin Star chefs, that promote the art of food and wine pairing.

From the beginning, Champagne Collet has identified itself with the Art Deco period that became popular in France after World War I. The creative wave unleashed by the Art Deco style was the perfect accompaniment to the joy and abandon of life in the 1920s and remains part of the attraction to Champagne in the present day.

Champagne Collet's vineyards are in Premier and Grand Cru villages that reflect the diversity of Champagne's terroirs. They source fruit from 850 growers spread over 160 of the 320 different crus in Champagne.

With gastronomy in mind, Chef de Cave, Sebastien Walasiak, selects fruit from these vineyards based on its power and concentration to produce Champagne Collet's delicate, elegant and well balanced cuvées that pair beautifully with food.





Champagne Gratiot-Pillière

Eleven Generations of Pinot Meunier based Grower Champagne

Pinot Meunier is often neglected in Champagne, brushed aside by the more famous varieties of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and used as a minor blending grape. With Gratiot-Pillière, in the Vallée de la Marne, Pinot Meunier reaches a degree of beauty rarely found in other terroirs.

This appellation, which makes up the northwestern part of Champagne, is dominated by Cretaceous chalk with a topsoil of clay, limestone and some flint. The Gratiot-Pillière family has been making wine here since 1657 and continuously focuses on vinifying Pinot Meunier based Champagne that is unwavering in its quality and distinctive nature.

In 1991, Olivier and Sébastien took over the estate from their father. Through generations of know-how, the brothers continue to devote themselves to growing quality grapes to produce the best possible results. The focus is mainly on Pinot Meunier, which accounts for 80% of the production over 15km of vines stretching from Château-Thierry to Charly-sur-Marne. With 18 hectares of vines, the Gratiot's have a persistent presence in the vines and manage a sustainable agriculture and minimal interventionist farming.

What is Grower Champagne? Grower Champagne is sparkling wine produced in the Champagne region of France by the same estate that owns the vineyards from which the grapes come. Traditionally the region has been dominated by large Champagne houses, and these firms may use grapes sourced from as many as 80 different vineyards.

Grower Champagnes tend to be more terrior focused, being sourced from single or closely located vineyards around a village.





Champagne Joël Falmet

Unique Grower Champagne from the Kimmeridgian Soil of the Cotes des Bar.

Joël Falmet's vineyards are located in the Aube (Bar-Sur- Aube) within the Côtes des Bar region of Champagne. The domaine consists of a small family vineyard of only 6.5 hectares (approx. 15.5 acres) with a total annual production around 2000 cases. The domaine has been passed down through the family for several generations. Joël took over the family domaine in the early 1990s. Joël, along with the help of his brother Yves (now a producer in Saint-Chinian), was the first in the family to produce an estate bottled wine.

About the Côtes des Bar

The Côtes des Bar has always been one of the more controversial regions of Champagne. The Côtes des Bar is more than 70 miles southeast from the center of Champagne, the Marne, which surrounds the towns of Reims and Epernay. The Aube river is responsible for creating the hillsides where Champagne vineyards now grow. Over the millennia the river cut its way through a thick layer of limestone exposing large channels of Kimmeridgian soil which now forms the hillsides of the Côtes des Bar. Originally considered part of Champagne, the vineyards were removed from the commercial classification of champagne in 1911. After riots broke out, a concession was made in mid 1911 to classify the vineyards of the Côtes des Bar as a "Champagne 2ème Zone". Essentially, this reclassification called the wines a second class Champagne.

The soil in the Côtes des Bar is very different from that of the Marne. In the Côtes des Bar the soil is primarily Upper Kimmeridgian, *the same soil that is found in Chablis*, while the soil in the Marne is light "Champanian" chalk. In fact, the Côtes des Bar is geographically and geologically much closer to Chablis than it is to the Marne. The Côtes des Bar generally produces richer, fuller-bodied wines than the Marne, partially because it is further south and therefore slightly warmer. In addition, the Kimmeridgian soil of the Côtes des Bar tends to produce richer wines than the light, fine chalk soil, found around Epernay.

