

SPECIAL 2019

WORLD OF CHAMPAGNE



A GLASS OF FINE WINE:
TWELVE WINEMAKERS TELL US THEIR FAVOURITES
200 TOP CHAMPAGNES PUT TO THE TEST

Vinum



Emmanuel Fourny, champagne juggler

VEUVE FOURNY

FLYING HIGH

with Emmanuel Fourny

Ever since brothers Charles and Emmanuel took over running the family business in Vertus, Veuve Fourny has taken flight. Their secret: meticulously detailed work and grapes from excellent sites.



Vertus is to the south of the Côte des Blancs, and most of its vineyards have a southerly or south-easterly aspect. A Vertus is even more opulent than a Mesnil, an Oger or a Cramant. Our Mont de Vertus Extra Brut 2012 is the perfect illustration of what I consider a Vertus to be. It comes from three plots (Barillier, Mont Ferré and Mont Ferré Bas) to the north of the village. They stand on little hillocks where the chalk is breaking through to the surface, providing minerality and finesse. Our Mont is a pure Blanc de Blancs with a dosage of two grams. We spent a long time deciding whether to use any dosage at all, but two grams are exactly what it needs for perfect balance.

For a long time, people argued that champagne grapes should be harvested before they were perfectly ripe to ensure high enough acidity levels. That is nonsense – you end up having to whitewash the sharp acidity with a

high dosage. Although perfectly ripe grapes have lower acidity, a new factor comes in to play that I call 'salinité' (salinity) or 'sapidité' (palatability) with a touch of elegant bitterness. Minerality is another word that can be used: an impression (so difficult to describe) that stimulates and provides tonic freshness, never tires, offers tension and length, and was once obliterated by this very same dosage. Perfect maturity, as little sulphur as possible during the harvest without subsequent long development on the lees, blending of wines fermented in tanks, barrels or casks for the aromatic complexity – all meticulously detailed work that is worth the effort. The 2012 vintage is a particularly good expression of our style and our work. 2012 is an underrated but great vintage! Rolf calls it the vintage of truth, and I would have to agree.

Extra Brut/Zéro/Nature/Non Dosé: nature 65 times over

There are many names for low-dosage (Extra Brut, less than six grams of added sugar per litre) or even zero-dosage champagnes (Brut Zéro, Brut Nature, Non Dosé). And they are becoming increasingly common: almost every producer now offers a low-dosage wine. If you include wines that are labelled Brut for one reason or another but still have a dosage of less than six grams, half of all the top champagnes currently sold are 'Extra Brut'. We have not separated the wines by style or colour; they are simply ordered by score.

Champagne Jacquesson

Extra Brut 2002

20 points | 2019 to 2022

A superb nose of dried fruit, herbs, exotic fruit (kiwi, grapefruit, lime) and then pastry aromas, beginning full with a refined yet clear attack, in full flow with a lingering, dense, spirited, juicy finish; absolutely the best.



Champagne Geoffroy

Les Houtrants Complantés

19 points | 2020 to 2024

A superb, complex nose of fresh herb, starfruit, green apple and pear aromas, exceptionally sophisticated with captivating acidity and a juicy lingering finish with a discreet touch of bitterness; individual and incomparable. Leave to mature.



Champagne Gosset

Celebris Vintage Extra Brut 2007

19 points | 2019 to 2022

Complex nose of reticent, smoky bottle age, tobacco, leather, spice and clove with a touch of red berry and fresh herb, angelica and chervil aromas, creamy in the attack with a dense, full yet very elegant structure and an impressive lingering finish; impressive.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Rosé Vinothèque MV12 Extra Brut

19 points | 2019 to 2020

Herb and currant nose with cloves, pepper and other spices, full in the attack, juicy yet mellow structure, elegant, full and lingering with a wonderful currant and gooseberry finish: the perfect wine for a festive feast.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Clos Notre Dame 2009

18.5 points | 2020 to 2024

A very reticent yet also elegant, fruity and floral nose, crystal clear in the attack, hugely elegant and refined, particularly mineral, sophisticated and lingering; still very youthful, we recommend putting this wine away for a couple of years.



Champagne De Sousa

Cuvée des Caudalies

18 points | 2019 to 2023

Initially very shaped by development, needs some air then offers up a complex nose with a hint of cardamom and lime, elegant in the attack, a creamy, airy structure, and a very long finish picking up the notes from the nose: a wonderful wine best opened the evening before.



Champagne De Sousa

Cuvée des Caudalies 2008

18 points | 2020 to 2025

Closed but becoming particularly complex after extensive swirling, with bottle age notes of pomelo, spices and a hint of turpentine and walnuts, direct in the attack, hugely sophisticated and taut: for connoisseurs, best served with a shellfish salad.



Champagne Tarlant

Cuvée Louis

18 points | 2019 to 2021

Characterful nose of dried apricot and prune aromas supported by pastry spice notes, a full and sophisticated structure, hugely dense and lingering, impressive; best enjoyed with game birds, veal kidneys or even foie gras or mature hard cheese.



Champagne Tarlant

L'Etincellante 2002

18 points | 2019 to 2020

Superb bottle age notes of candied fruit, mirabelle plum jam and mint, full in the attack with a dense structure, perceptible acidity, sophisticated with a bitter touch in the lingering finish reminiscent of an old Vouvray; a characterful, individual wine.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Monts de Vertus Extra Brut 2012

18 points | 2020 to 2022

Complex bottle age with fruity, smoke, marigold, vanilla and pastry aromas, particularly dense in the attack, imposing development, impressive sophistication and length, immense complexity, and almost crystalline purity: still youthful, could mature.



Champagne Bonnaire

Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut

17.5 points | 2019 to 2020

A reticent mineral and herb spice nose, immensely straight-lined structure, slender and elegant yet still tonic and fresh; exceptionally pure, the Cramant terroir at its finest.



Champagne Geoffroy

Meunier Les Tiersaudes Millésime 2013

17.5 points | 2019 to 2020

Tempting elderflower nose with a subtle hint of caramel, creamy in the attack with a delicate, elegant structure, airy and light; the best Meunier wine we tasted, and a must for fans of new discoveries.



Champagne Geoffroy

Pureté

17.5 points | 2019 to 2020

Impressive floral and herb spice nose with some pastry notes, particularly elegant, slender and lean, delicate and fresh yet still lingering and taut. Enjoy with freshwater fish such as a pike-perch fillet.



Champagne Lallier

Ouvrage Extra Brut

17.5 points | 2019 to 2021

Complex, tempting nose of mirabelle plum jam, dried apricots and apple slices, full in the attack with a dense, rich structure like a Chablis Grenouille, full and very, very long; a stunning wine more than worth its price tag.



Champagne Marc Hébrart

Rive Droite Rive Gauche 2012

17.5 points | 2019

Superb nose of exotic fruit, floral and herb notes with starfruit, angelica and hyacinth, crystal clear in the attack, creamy structure, perfect harmony, and a juicy grapefruit finish; wonderful now as an aperitif or with creative cuisine.



Champagne Philipponnat

Grand Cru Extra Brut 2008

17.5 points | 2020 to 2024

Impressive nose of exotic fruit, spice, clove and porcini mushrooms, crystal clear in the attack with a crystalline structure, particularly juicy and sophisticated, and a lingering green apple and lemon finish; still a very youthful wine, best left to mature for a while.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

R Extra Brut

17.5 points | 2019 to 2021

Reticent then emphatically mineral with fresh herb and lime notes, crystal clear in the attack, particularly good balance between fullness and freshness, sinewy with lively acidity and a very lingering finish. Enjoy with freshwater fish.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Rosé Brut Premier Cru

17.5 points | 2019 to 2021

Stunning red berry, currant and cherry nose, particularly juicy, spirited and dense in style, exceptional balance between sophistication and fullness, structure and freshness, with a lingering berry finish; enjoy with grilled aubergine fillets.



Champagne Bruno Paillard

Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru

17 points | 2019 to 2021

Powerful nose with lovely bottle age, hazelnut and mirabelle plum aromas, full in the attack with a dense structure and a lingering, downright impressive finish; a full-bodied, characterful wine best enjoyed with creative Asian dishes.



Champagne De Venoge

Princes Extra Brut

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Reticent nose of citrus and other fruit, dense and compact structure, good length, and a juicy finish picking up the notes from the nose; a refreshing wine that would go well with a picnic, pie or sausages.



Champagne Devaux

Ultra D Extra Brut

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Initially a little reductive but soon becoming clean with yellow and green apple notes, lively, slender and lean, particularly fresh and lingering, elegant; the score is for its particular harmony. Enjoy with fish and seafood.



Champagne Fleury

Sonate 2011

17 points | 2019

Marigold and acacia with a touch of turpentine, ripe and full on the palate, well balanced, beautifully lingering; for fans of champagnes with bottle age who do not want to wait eons for their wine. Enjoy now.



Champagne Fleury

Fleur de l'Europe

17 points | 2019 to 2022

Interesting nose with mineral and fresh fruit aromas, touches of spicy herbs and flowers and some menthol, straight-lined, hugely sophisticated with crystalline freshness: for its crystal clear, direct, precise style. We like this a lot. A bargain.



Champagne Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin

Veuve Clicquot Extra Brut Extra Old

17 points | 2019 to 2021

Subtle bottle age of dried herbs with a hint of eucalyptus, very present on the palate, particularly lively but not at all aggressive, with a wonderful grapefruit finish and a delicate bitter note. Enjoy with mature, non-bitter cheese.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature

17 points | 2019

Reticent floral and grapefruit nose with a hint of lemon verbena, crystal clear in the attack, bewitchingly fresh and airy with a lingering slender finish picking up the notes from the nose; enjoy as a dignified aperitif or with light fish dishes or fried whitefish fillet.



Champagne Besserat de Bellefon

Cuvée des Moines Extra Brut

16.5 points | 2019 to 2020

Reticent herb and green apple nose, crystal clear in the attack, slender structure, and a fresh and light finish; unpretentious, exceptionally made, the type of sparkling wine that always fits the moment.



Champagne Besserat de Bellefon

Triple B Brut Nature

16.5 points | 2019 to 2020

An interesting individual nose of fresh herb aromas, particularly straight-lined, refreshing, slender, but lingering and particularly light; the 'Nature' label has really hit the mark. Enjoy with flaky pastries.



Champagne Bonnet Ponson

Seconde Nature

16.5 points | 2019 to 2020

Powerful vanilla and white peach nose, and present oak that dominated but did not disrupt the entire tasting, at most resulting in a rather abrupt tart finish; an interesting, characterful wine, exceptionally made.



Champagne Bruno Michel

Assemblée Extra Brut

16.5 points | 2019 to 2020

An uncomplicated wine with no complex, just as we like it: straight-lined, refreshing, mineral and fruity, with a juicy rhubarb and gooseberry finish. Enjoy with a summery salad.



Champagne Canard Duchêne

P. 181 Extra Brut Bio

16.5 points | 2019 to 2021

Refreshing, juicy, pleasing, perhaps not particularly complex, but joyful and well made, made from organic base wines which alone deserves applause.



Champagne Comtes de Dampierre

Cuvée des Ambassadeurs Extra Brut

16.5 points | 2019

Interesting hazelnut and pastry nose, powerful in the attack with a dense structure, spirited and lingering with delicate butter notes in the finish. Sophisticated, enjoyable with classic cuisine.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Blanc de Blancs

17.5 points | 2019 to 2021

Complex nose of spice, exotic fruit, mineral touches, toasted aromas and pastry, full structure, hugely spirited yet also polished and elegant, boasting a juicy, lingering finish with wonderful, delicately bitter grapefruit notes. Superb.



Champagne Bonnaire

Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

17 points | 2019 to 2020

A rather more intense nose than the Extra Brut, with green pomelo aromas; on the palate the wine is fuller and more imposing than lower dosage wines, but rather more mineral with the same pleasantly lingering finish.



Champagne Canard Duchêne

Charles VII Blanc de Blancs

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Mineral nose with touches of herb and green apple, a dense and powerful structure, juicy, spirited, dense, lingering and characterful. More than worth its price tag, best enjoyed with flavourful dishes.



Champagne Diebolt Vallois

Prestige Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Still rather closed but opens up with swirling, becoming floral and fruity with pineapple and other exotic fruit aromas, an elegant, airy, creamy structure, just the right amount of fullness, and a lingering juicy finish; enjoy as an aperitif or with light global cuisine.



Champagne Drappier

Blanc de Blancs

17 points | 2019 to 2021

A particularly interesting nose of exotic fruit and eucalyptus, powerful and direct in the attack with a dense, spirited structure, perceptible and refreshing acidity, and a lingering lime finish; a characterful Blanc de Blancs. Perfect with fried freshwater fish or a pike-perch fillet.



Champagne J. Vigner

Silexus Sezannensis

17 points | 2019 to 2020

The Sézanne region runs almost seamlessly into the Côte des Blancs, and Chardonnay again reigns supreme. Particularly mineral, perhaps less fruity than wines from the great Cramant sites, but hugely refined and fresh.



Champagne Jean Pernet

JP Grand Cru 2009

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Creamy, crisp, refreshing, harmonious with the whole freshness and minerality of a great terroir in a special vintage bottled in perfect, unadulterated form, all at a bargain price.



Champagne Jean Pernet

Prestige Blanc de Blancs

17 points | 2019 to 2020

Mineral with herb and citrus fruit aromas, juicy structure, crisp freshness, impressively spirited and authentic with good length, perfect with freshwater fish. Good value for money.



Champagne Veuve Fourny et Fils

Grande Réserve Vertus Brut

16.5 points | 2019 to 2020

Initially slightly reductive but quickly improves and develops citrus fruit aromas, compact in the attack, a well-balanced structure, juicy and lingering, a light, refreshing all-rounder that is always the right fit.



Champagne AR Lenoble

Brut Intense

16 points | 2019 to 2020

This wine's name is well-chosen as it offers up an intense nose of pastry spice, vanilla and fruit aromas, compact and full on the palate with the notes in the finish reminiscent of the nose. Original, more than worth its modest price tag.



Champagne Canard Duchêne

Léonie Brut

16 points | 2019

Fruity spice on the nose with apple and clove aromas, compact, a juicy structure, pleasantly dense and lingering, a cleanly made all-rounder that always fits the moment and does not cost the earth.



Champagne Comtes de Dampierre

Grande Cuvée

16 points | 2019

A pleasant green hazelnut and golden apple nose, very well balanced and elegant on the palate, creamy and fresh, pleasantly lingering, appealing and well made, enjoy with classic cuisine.



Champagne Piper Heidsieck

Cuvée Brut

16 points | 2019

A reticent fruity nose, compact in the attack, a crisp and juicy structure, lingering, a joyful and uncomplicated wine with bite and density that works in many settings: as a refreshing aperitif with snacks, or with light or more flavoursome dishes.



Champagne Soutiran

Alexandre

16 points | 2019 to 2020

Powerful elderflower nose, compact in the attack, utterly fruity development, a juicy finish; a refreshing picnic wine that would also go well with savoury snacks or even sausages.



Champagne Thiénot

Brut

16 points | 2019

A reticent fruity nose of green and red apple aromas, juicy in the attack, refreshing and straight-lined on the palate, pleasantly lingering; an uncomplicated fizz for parties or as an aperitif.



Champagne Chanoine

Tzarina N°1 Brut

16 points | 2019

An appealing clean nose of exotic fruit and brioche aromas, airy structure, well balanced, mild, mellow, lingering; a very cleanly made but also rather arbitrary fizz for fans of mild champagnes.



THE LAST



BALANCING ACT

No, he didn't drop it. The Magnum has stayed whole (if he hasn't drunk it empty by now). Fearful at first (he finally juggled a bottle for the first time), then more sure he hurried afterwards, when it was passed to him, he finally threw it into the air himself and cleverly caught it again, at the end almost with his eyes closed.

Of course, it was only a timid attempt to break out of the routine a little and almost not at all, to spice it up with a shot of chance, to surprise it and let it surprise you. To stir a pinch of childlike naivety into the cloudy soup of certainties instead of seasoning them with the bitter laurels that

the conscientious craftsman reaps from experience. To regain a touch of innocence, innocence of the first unfinished picture, of the first timid swallow, of the first adventurous harvest, of the first feverish pressing. Were not works of art created by happy mistakes that led out of the impasse of unimaginativeness? Doesn't wine fascinate us precisely because, as a natural product, it is based on specifications that cannot all be calculated? Balance does not show who stretches out on his king size bed and holds his arms in the air. Balance shows who throws experience into the air and still doesn't let it fall.