



A very personal Champagne tour

For restaurateur and Best Sommelier in the World Gerard Basset OBE MW MS, nothing beats Champagne when it comes to celebrating a special occasion. He tells Tina Gellie why it holds such an important place in his heart, and recommends wines from 16 of his favourite houses.

This wine is one of 16 he has specially chosen for Decanter as his favourites under various Champagnes styles. For blanc de blancs, he chose the Les Chétilons from Pierre Péters, as well as non-vintage wines from Ruinart, Agrapart & Fils, Gosset and Veuve Fourny...



Style and substance: 16 of Basset's favourites



Ruinart, Blanc de Blancs NV

£40-£60 widely available via UK agent Moët Hennessy UK

I'm extremely attached to Ruinart. It's a house I've visited many times - it's the oldest in Champagne and its magnificent cellars in Crayères (UNESCO heritage-listed) are truly

magnificent. Frédéric Panaïotis is doing a fabulous job. This is light, fresh and soft on the palate with pear and almond notes. A creamy style that is drinking well now. Wonderful for an aperitif and with canapés such as blinis with smoked trout, crème fraîche and caviar or crab meat and cumin tartlette. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alcohol** 12%



Agrapart & Fils, Les 7 Crus NV

£35-£49 Forest Wines, Hunstworth, Noble & Wild, Noble Wines, Philglas & Swiggot,

Theatre of Wine, The Victualer, The Wine Tasting Shop, The Wine Society, Selfridges, Vine Trail

This is a grower I've followed for a long time and I love serving Agrapart wines in my restaurant. I have great admiration for its production methods and commitment to excellence. This is a wine for food, not just for an aperitif - I'd like to pair it with tuna sashimi and lobster tempura. It has great individual character, but it's not too crazy. Elegant and intense with beautiful purity of nectarines. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 12%



Gosset, Grand Blanc de Blancs NV

£41.67-£59 widely available via UK agent Louis Latour Agencies

Gosset's is always a unique style of blanc de blancs. It is rich, creamy, full-bodied and full-flavoured for what is usually a more restrained style. This would go well with a meaty fish like halibut

and a courgette and aubergine gratin. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Veuve Fourny, Blanc de Blancs NV

£21.50-£32 Christopher Piper, Highbury Vintner, St Andrews

Wine, The Solent Cellar, The Wine Society, Thorman Hunt, Vin Cognito

I don't know this house well but we do list this wine at the restaurant and it is excellent value for the high quality of Champagne it makes. Stylish, elderflower and citrus fruit with lots of freshness and energy without being too nervy. Creamy but not heavy, I'd like a lightly spiced stew of mussels, cod and chorizo. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Pierre Péters, Les Chétillons 2009

£63 Ministry of Drinks

Pierre Péters is a talented grower who makes truly stunning Champagne. This is an amazing single-vineyard Chardonnay from 80-year-old vines planted in Le Ménil. It has great purity, finesse,

length and acidity, with flavours of candied angelica. So complex! I'd serve it with sea bass cooked in a salt crust with a salsa. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 12.5%



Drappier, Brut Nature Sans Soufre NV

£43-£54 Berkman Wine Cellars, Handford Wines

I like what Drappier is doing with Aube fruit. This is an original and interesting blanc de noirs that's bone dry

- almost naked - with quince, linden and herbal tea notes.

It's very serious with lots of weight, making it a perfect food wine for roast guinea fowl with a gratin of root vegetables. A great wine for Christmas turkey too. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Ulisse Collin, Les Maillons Blanc de Noirs NV

£75 The Good Wine Shop, Vine Trail

Tasted blind, you'd never think this was Champagne if it weren't for the bubbles. It shows intriguing clay, wet earth, cured meat and ripe quince fruit that's not heavy at all. It's a different style of Champagne but not weird -

it still has the character you'd expect, but in an original way. A stunning wine with a gorgeous colour that would stand up to rib-eye of beef. Champagne lovers should try this! **Drink** 2016-2024 **Alc** 12%

AR Lenoble, Rosé Terroirs NV

£38.50 Stannary St Wine Co

I love this house, I love this rosé and I ➤

16 of Basset's favourites (continued)



love the philosophy of Anne Malassagne and her brother Antoine and what they are doing here. This is a top producer flying under the radar making high-quality wines. I like the vintage wines, but this non-vintage rosé (based on 2012 fruit) is fantastic for the price. Flavours of yellow cherry and redcurrant with great depth that would suit pigeon salad with a raspberry vinaigrette. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%



Fleury, Rosé de Saignée NV
£36 **Vintage Roots**
I really like what they are doing at this long-time biodynamic estate. Beautiful full colour and very rich in Pinot Noir flavour. A real food rosé that would suit carpaccio of beef with parmesan and olive oil to reflect the lovely umami notes in the wine. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12.5%



Moët & Chandon, Nectar Impérial Rosé NV
£45 **Moët Hennessy UK**
While you might not think of Champagne for a dessert, a demi-sec is a nice change from a sweet still wine. This is fun but serious, from a grand marque that, while a real giant, is respected for its quality and consistency. Benoît Gouez is a very talented chef de cave. This wine has pure strawberry and raspberry fruit making it an ideal match for Eton mess or pavlova. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 12%



Laurent-Perrier 2006
£28-£55 **Majestic, Waitrose, Selfridges, Harrods, Champagne Co, Oddbins, Laithwaite's, Jeroboams, The Oxford Wine Co, Millésima, The Finest Bubble**
An admired and serious house that has a high level of consistency. Laurent-Perrier's prestige cuvée Grand Siècle is excellent but this basic vintage is good value, though still young at 10 years old. Harmonious and well

made with a real purity of rich almond and nectarine fruit. The toasty finish would pair well with seared scallops and bacon. **Drink** 2016-2026 **Alc** 12%



Krug, Grande Cuvée NV
£90-£147 **widely available via UK agent Moët Hennessy UK**
I've always served Krug at my restaurants and I'm a big admirer of what CEO Maggie Henriquez does, plus chef de cave Eric Lebel is a genius! This is a very stylish wine – flamboyant but for all the right reasons. It has everything you want on the nose: truffles, Brazil nuts, blood orange and dried flowers, then definition, energy and precision on the palate. A great food wine that deserves something posh: like turbot with a sage or tarragon cream sauce. **Drink** 2016-2026 **Alc** 12%



Bollinger, RD 2002
£125-£200 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Bi Wine, Farr Vintners, Hedonism, Justerini & Brooks, Millésima, Lea & Sandeman, Private Cellar, Roberson, The Finest Bubble, The Oxford Wine Co, The Wine Society**
I've followed this house for a long time and, sentimentally (as the winner of the Bollinger Cup for top taster in my Master of Wine graduating class) it's always had a special place in my heart. The RD is revolutionary, and this wine is back on form, from a great vintage that is showing really well. Disgorged in 2015, it shows lovely development: rich but not heavy, with very elegant, complex herbal tea and truffle notes. I'd serve charcuterie-filled tortellini with truffle shavings and olive oil. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 12%



Taittinger, Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs Brut 2006
£93-£147 **widely available via UK agent Hatch Mansfield**
I have great admiration for Taittinger. For Pierre-Emmanuel to buy it back [with backing by Crédit Agricole] after the rest of the family voted to sell the

house took great courage and commitment. This is a classic blanc de blancs – very pure with elegant brioche notes and apricot gratin flavours. This wine is not at its peak, but is drinking perfectly now. It's all that you want from a great Champagne. I would serve it with an old but classic recipe: lobster thermidor. **Drink** 2016-2026 **Alc** 12%



Louis Roederer, Cristal 2009
£150-£180 **widely available via UK agent Maisons Marques et Domaines**
One of the grand marques and a magical name in Champagne – who wouldn't want to drink Cristal? This has floral and peach notes with a touch of spice and great purity of fruit. Such style and elegance! It's a wine that always needs age, so this is very young still. I'd cellar it for two to three years at least so it can develop more. It could make a delicious combination with a dish of red mullet fillets roasted with green olive, pancetta and basil. **Drink** 2016-2034 **Alc** 12%



Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill 2004
£125-£175 **widely available via UK agent Pol Roger UK**
I love this house, and perhaps there is a bit of me in this wine: born in France but almost more English than the English – and you can't have more English than Winston Churchill. I've followed Pol Roger and this emblematic cuvée for a long time. This is a super wine: a developed style showing honey notes, nougat and even a bit of cigar and tobacco which is perfect for Winston. So elegant and so fine, not heavy and very pure. It's an exuberant, luxurious Champagne so it needs food to match: caviar, smoked salmon and fresh lobster. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 12.5%

Basset did not score these wines as they are a personal selection of some – not all – of his favourite cuvées and houses

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