

## Worksheet Fourteen

# THE GRAPES OF CHAMPAGNE

## MARVELLOUS MEUNIER

- » Ruinart 'R' de Ruinart Brut NV
- » Billecart-Salmon Brut Réserve NV
- » Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut NV
- » Francis Boulard Les Murgiers Brut Nature NV
- » Laherte Frères Les Vignes d'Autrefois Extra Brut Vintage
- » Egly-Ouriet Les Vignes de Vrigny NV

As with last chapter's tasting on Pinot Noir, the wines are tasted in order to reach 100% of the grape just studied. If selecting one bottle only, choose Egly-Ouriet.

Allow six flutes per person, but pour the wines one at a time. Leave a little in each glass, so that the aromas can be reassessed over the course of the tasting.

Recall from earlier in the chapter the characteristics of Meunier: fragrant, fruity, gently spicy, confectionery notes, doughy, bready, biscuity, sweet brioche; excellent effervescence. Rich, warm, round, fruit-driven palate; soft, easy, elegant, depending on *terroir*. With age, smooth, full of toasty fruitcake, loaded with condensed but succulent dried apricots with honey.

### Ruinart 'R' de Ruinart Brut NV

*40% Chardonnay, 57% Pinot Noir, 3% Meunier*

This wine displays sustained effervescence and foam. It includes reserves from the previous two years. Dosage is 9 g/L. Delicate aromas of white-fleshed fruits – apples and pears – combined with apricots, hazelnuts and young almonds, give the initial impression. Some floral notes mingle with delicate spice, followed by biscuity brioche. A refreshing palate of zesty fruitiness is well balanced and full-bodied. The finish is long. You might like to pair this champagne at some time with creamy cheeses, fish or shellfish.

#### True or False

Chardonnay dominates the palate of this wine despite the component of Pinot Noir. ....

The Meunier is not strongly evident. ....

### Billecart-Salmon Brut Réserve NV

*30% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, 40% Meunier*

An *assemblage* from three years and 23 vineyards. Swedish expert Richard Juhlin calls it 'the best NV of the extremely fruity school'. It presents beautifully in the glass, with abundant and persistent mousse. The aromas of the champagne could equally spring from a huge bouquet of spring flowers next to fresh fruits, especially ripe pears. The palate is creamy, rich and vinous, together with its freshness. The overall impression is one of balance and harmony – this is what the House aims for. Food matches are many.

#### True or False

The Billecart-Salmon has aromas of fruit, flowers and spice. ....

The Billecart-Salmon is refreshing, fruity and elegant. ....

The Billecart-Salmon has a very soft, creamy palate. ....

Meunier is noticeably evident in this blend. ....

## Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut NV

20% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Meunier

A blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Grand and Premier Cru villages, and Meunier from Dizy, Damery and Venteuil, with 12–14% of reserve wines from three prior years. Gentle aromas of white flowers, white fruits, spice, pineapple and grapefruit lead into a light and delicate mouth feel with a wide range of flavours. The finale is classically elegant.

### True or False

The distinguishing feature of this champagne is its purity and elegance. ....

The Meunier dominates this blend. ....

The champagne is well balanced. ....

One of the aromas is honey. ....

## Francis Boulard Les Murgiers Brut Nature NV

30% Pinot Noir, 70% Meunier

This should be served slightly warmer than normal – about 10° C (50° F) – and be allowed to breathe a little to show off the fruit and spice on the palate. Aromas of citrus, apples and pears greet the nose, with aromatic spices. Purity, complexity and palate length make this wine an outstanding match for charcuterie, white meats and fish.

### True or False

This wine is the most complex wine so far. ....

This wine gives the impression of roundness in the mouth. ....

Red fruits also form part of the aromas. ....

The champagne is very mineral. ....

## Champagne Laherte Frères Les Vignes d'Autrefois Extra Brut Vintage

100% Meunier

There are aromas of fresh dough, white fruits and a touch of citrus. The vines supplying this champagne were planted by Grandfather Laherte in Chavot and Mancy, in the Marne Valley, between 1947 and 1953. *Grand-père* feared frosts, despite planting mid-slope. Vinified in barrels. The palate attack is very bright, fresh and sappy, with good length. Without cellar time, the 'attack' of this champagne may be too ferocious. As with the previous champagne, breathing it, and a serving temperature around 10° C (50° F) will greatly enhance enjoyment. Dosage 5 g/L.

### True or False

This champagne is very mineral. ....

This wine is delicate. ....

This wine is well-balanced. ....

## Champagne Egly-Ouriet Les Vignes de Vrigny Extra Brut NV

100% Meunier

This wine comes from a highly regarded Ambonnay-based grower who retains a plot of old Meunier at Vrigny. Low yields, late harvesting, first fermentation in oak, no filtration, 40 months of lees time and low dosage result in a creamy champagne with a soft palate. The champagne opens with aromas of red fruits and sweet confectionery. Honey and lightly spicy Dutch biscuits are part of the follow-up aromas. Mineral qualities in its youth soften to spicy Easter buns with age.

**True or False**

There are notes of caramel in the aroma spectrum. ....

The wine we are drinking is old. ....

Now assume that the wines are numbered 1 to 6, and write the number of the wine next to the typically Meunier qualities listed, if that characteristic appears.

Fragrant .....

Fruity .....

Spicy .....

Confectionery notes .....

Doughy, bready, biscuity, or sweet brioche .....

Rich .....

Warm .....

Round .....

Soft .....

Elegant .....

Smooth .....

Toasty .....

Fruit cake .....

Dried apricots .....

Honey .....

List any other aromas, flavours, textures discovered.

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.....

Which was your preferred wine?

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What were its outstanding qualities for you?

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