

## Worksheet Sixteen

# STRUCTURE, BODY AND WEIGHT IN CHAMPAGNE

For this tasting session, mix solutions of sugar water and vodka alcohol water as instructed below. Source the champagne with glassware to suit. A spittoon will be necessary, at least for the first part. You will also need a bottle of plain soda water. If you're small in number, try the exercises with one of the suggested champagne examples.

- » Vazart-Coquart Brut Réserve Blanc de Blancs NV
- » Duval-Leroy Fleur de Champagne Brut Premier Cru NV
- » Taittinger Brut Réserve NV
- » Pommery Brut Royal NV
- » Lanson Black Label NV
- » Paul Bara Brut Reserve NV

## WEIGHT EXERCISE

### The influence of sugar and alcohol on the body of a liquid

To make the sugar water, dissolve 10 g sugar in 1 litre water. To make the alcohol water, measure 120 ml vodka in a measuring jug and top it up to 1 litre with water.

Set out 3 glasses per person. Pour sufficient liquid for a taste into each glass: one with plain water, one sugar water and one alcohol water. Taste each, rolling the liquid around the mouth with the tongue. Are they light-, medium- or full-bodied?

Which solution is heaviest? .....

Lightest? .....

What is the result when the sugar water is mixed with the alcohol water, using approximately half of each? (Remember that you are diluting both the sugar and the alcohol.) Is the resulting fluid heavier or lighter than the others?

Make new sugar water and alcohol solutions using soda water instead of plain water.

Is the soda water a distraction to judging weight or body?

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If so, consider that the effervescence in champagne may also be a distraction to your judgement of other qualities in the wine. Rinse your mouth well after you have finished the exercise.

For champagne, think of a long precious-metal chain, which begins heavily but is beautifully made, and ends with links of immense delicacy and finesse, having a slow gradation between the two ends. That is the spectrum of weight, or body.

Think of geometric shapes, from a flat line to a rigid square, through various shapes of sharp or wide angularity, moving slowly towards an oval. Think of the human physique built around the backbone – delicate, light, slim, average, fleshy, solid, stocky, fat, robust, huge. That is structure.

Taste the champagnes.

- » For your first impression, describe the champagne's attack – the acidity level.
- » Use words to describe the structure of each of the wines: ethereal, gauzy, dainty, fine, lacy, silky, supple, smooth, graceful, elegant, refined, aromatic, soft, harmonious, round, flabby, flat (insufficient acidity, insufficient mousse, sweetness out of balance with the acidity), hard-to-tell (difficult to categorise), compact, tight, firm, powerful. Think of the structure in relation to the acidity or freshness, possible minerality, the fruitiness, the texture, the influence of the vinification process, the stage of development. Does the champagne have a good design? Has the recipe and the method of making come together satisfactorily?
- » For weight, cup the tongue to feel the physical weight of the champagne resting on it; then roll the wine around in the mouth to feel the viscosity. Use the same types of words as the ones above to describe the weight.

Mark the wines from 1 to 10, where 1 is least and 10 is most. (Note that it is possible for two champagnes to have the same number.)

### Vazart-Coquart Brut Réserve Blanc de Blancs NV

*100% Chardonnay*

First impression .....

Body/weight/fluidity:

Lightness            1 ..... 10

Weight                1 ..... 10

Describe the structure: .....

Complexity           1 ..... 10

Length                1 ..... 10

Final impression:

Elegance             1 ..... 10

Power                 1 ..... 10

### Duval-Leroy Fleur de Champagne Brut Premier Cru NV

*70% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir*

First impression .....

Body/weight/fluidity:

Lightness            1 ..... 10

Weight                1 ..... 10

Describe the structure: .....

Complexity           1 ..... 10

Length                1 ..... 10

Final impression:

Elegance             1 ..... 10

Power                 1 ..... 10

### Taittinger Brut Réserve NV

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

First impression .....		
Body/weight/fluidity:		
Lightness	1 .....	10
Weight	1 .....	10
Describe the structure: .....		
Complexity	1 .....	10
Length	1 .....	10
Final impression:		
Elegance	1 .....	10
Power	1 .....	10

### Pommery Brut Royal NV

*35% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 30% Meunier*

First impression .....		
Body/weight/fluidity:		
Lightness	1 .....	10
Weight	1 .....	10
Describe the structure: .....		
Complexity	1 .....	10
Length	1 .....	10
Final impression:		
Elegance	1 .....	10
Power	1 .....	10

### Lanson Black Label NV

*35% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir, 15% Meunier*

First impression .....		
Body/weight/fluidity:		
Lightness	1 .....	10
Weight	1 .....	10
Describe the structure: .....		
Complexity	1 .....	10
Length	1 .....	10
Final impression:		
Elegance	1 .....	10
Power	1 .....	10

## Paul Bara Brut Reserve NV

*20% Chardonnay, 80% Pinot Noir*

First impression .....

Body/weight/fluidity:

Lightness            1 ..... 10

Weight                1 ..... 10

Describe the structure: .....

Complexity           1 ..... 10

Length                1 ..... 10

Final impression:

Elegance             1 ..... 10

Power                 1 ..... 10

Could any of the champagnes be described in texture as steely, compact, firm, robust, round, supple, ample or fleshy?

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Wine writer and academic Patrick Iland makes an interesting point about matching food with wine in general: he suggests matching the power of the food with the weight of the wine.<sup>1</sup>

### ENDNOTES

1. Iland, Patrick; Gago, Peter; Caillard, Andrew; and Dry, Peter, *A Taste of the World of Wine*, Patrick Iland Wine Promotions Pty. Ltd., Adelaide, South Australia, 2009, p. 195.