

Worksheet Twenty Two

THE CÔTE DES BAR

This tasting features two brackets: three vintage champagnes from small producers, all blends, and three non-vintage offering bigger blending scope. If you want to try just one champagne, select it from the first bracket.

- » Fleury Père & Fils Millésime (Vintage, usually released with extended ageing)
- » Cédric Bouchard Côte de Val de Vilaine non-vintaged, from a single year)
- » Dosnon & Lepage Récolte Rosé NV
- » Piper-Heidsieck Brut NV
- » Drappier Carte d'Or Brut NV
- » Devaux Grande Réserve Brut NV

Fleury Père & Fils Millésime (Vintage)

Blend dependent on year but Pinot Noir–dominant over Chardonnay, usually in ratio 80/20.

Founded in 1929 in response to the lack of demand of the Great Depression, Fleury was one of the earliest *récoltant manipulateurs*. Its 14 hectares began a very early conversion to organic and biodynamic in 1989. It also buys from other biodynamic producers in the area. After traditional pressing, fermentation is carried out in wood, then a long secondary fermentation, under cork, ensues; minimal sulphur is added to the finished product. Malolactic fermentation is usually avoided. These are generous champagnes of fruit and mineral interest, with excellent length. Dosage is available in a Brut or Extra-Brut styles.

Cédric Bouchard Côte de Val de Vilaine

(from a single year, but does not rest on its lees long enough to be called 'vintage')

100% Pinot Noir

This champagne is created from the grapes of a vineyard planted in 1974. Viticulture, vinification – everything is natural and hand-crafted. Only naturally occurring yeasts are used for fermentation, which is in stainless steel, and secondary fermentation is managed in order to achieve lower pressure than usual (like Besserat de Bellefon's range, and Mumm de Cramant). The wines undergo malolactic fermentation. The goal is to produce interesting wine before the bubbles are considered. Cédric Bouchard's wines are cellar-worthy and will repay storage. This wine has zero dosage. Bouchard also makes a 100% Pinot Blanc, 'La Bolorée'.

Dosnon Récolte Rosé

95% Pinot Noir, 5% Meunier

Davy Dosnon creates a surprisingly light, fresh and elegant champagne with his Rosé, a blend of two years of reserve wines plus the current year. Vinified in barrel for 8–10 months, lightly pink, delightfully scented with red fruits, the finish lingers with savoury emphasis.

Champagne		Score
Fleury	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
	/20	
Cédric Bouchard	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
	/20	
Dosnon	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
	/20	

Do you detect any differences that you might attribute to the different villages? What might they be?

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Piper-Heidsieck Brut NV

10–15% Chardonnay, 55–60% Pinot Noir, 15–20% Meunier

Blended from 100 *crus*, each separately managed by grape variety in a huge library of temperature-controlled stainless steel vats, in a gleaming new winery. There is minimalist winemaking, and adjustment of annual variations by the addition of 10–15% reserve wines (some up to 30 years old!) to the blend. Dosage is not disclosed, but approximately 6–12 g/L, depending on characteristics of the base vintage.

Drappier Carte d'Or Brut NV

5%–15% Chardonnay, 80%–90% Pinot Noir (Côte des Bar), 5% Meunier (Marne)

From General de Gaulle's favourite champagne House, the vineyards are geared for low yield in the Aube and the Marne. Drappier uses a water press to ensure a very soft pressing. The juice is then gravity-fed into fermentation tanks to preserve fruit qualities and reduce the risk of over-oxygenation. Fermentation is cool and long in variously sized stainless steel vats, sufficient for over 75 different *crus*, which helps make the blend together with some wines fermented in barrel. Reserve wines are stored in barrels, using a solera system begun in 2006. Dosage is via demi-johns of concentrated liqueur described in the chapter dealing with dosage. Dosage is 7 g/L.

Devaux Grande Réserve Brut NV

30% Chardonnay (Côte des Bar, Côte des Blancs, Vitryat), 70% Pinot Noir (Côte des Bar)

The Grande Réserve is a blend of 50 *crus*, the first pressing only, vinified in stainless steel with malolactic fermentation. 10–20% of the wine, the reserves, is aged in large oak barrels. The wine rests on its lees for three years, followed by cellaring for a further 3–6 months after dosage. Dosage is approximately 9 g/L, from liquor aged in large oak casks.

Champagne		Score
Piper-Heidsieck	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
		/20

Drappier	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
	/20	
Devaux	Appearance:	/1
	Aromas:	/4
	Body and texture:	/3
	Balance:	/3
	Flavour:	/4
	Finish (length):	/2
	General impression:	/3
	/20	

Is it possible to detect any of the characteristics of the first bracket as a component of the second?

If so, what might they be?

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In the second bracket, in your opinion, which two have most in common?

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Which champagne is best balanced between sweet and acid?

Preferred champagne?