

## Worksheet Twenty Three

# CHAMPAGNE RULES!

Prepare two to six champagnes in matching pairs as follows:

- » Gosset Grand Blanc de Blancs NV
- » Godmé Père & Fils Blanc de Blancs NV
- » Champagne Jacquart Brut Mosaïque Rosé NV
- » Devaux Rosée NV
- » Marc Hebrart Special Club Premier Cru Vintage
- » Ayala Perle d'Ayala Brut Millésime (Vintage)

If convenient, mask the wines well with foil, and number them with a marking pen. Have the corks removed and the wines poured by a third party. A couple of Tasters might choose a pair of champagnes, have their champagne-preserving caps ready, and ask a third party to pour the champagnes without them seeing the label. An alternative method for a couple is to alternate duties as follows.

- » In a room away from the tasting room, person one enters, masks the wines, and then leaves the room
- » Person two enters the room, opens the wines, and then leaves the room
- » Person one enters the room, puts stickers on the masked bottles, then leaves the room
- » Person two enters the room and pours the blind tasting

**This doesn't work if you peek!**

Pour the wines in pairs and, from your own senses and the descriptions, try to work out which is which. (Or toss a coin to decide!) Here are approximate descriptions for each pair. To update your descriptions, consult the producer's distributor or the producer's website.

## FIRST PAIR

*One producer is a négociant and the other a récoltant manipulant.*

Gosset and Godmé are both cellarworthy 100% Chardonnay champagnes with a dosage of 7–8 g/L, but here the similarities end.

Gosset claims to be the oldest House in Champagne (founded 1584). For its aperitif-style NV Blanc de Blancs, grapes are purchased from 15 growers in the Côte des Blancs and the Mountain of Reims. The wines do not undergo malolactic fermentation, leaving them very fresh and crisp. The champagne generally displays a decided minerality from the Côte des Blancs, combining with citrus characters. On opening, developed notes of honeyed quince paste emerge. Dosage 7 g/L.

The Godmé (House founded in 1930) – light, fresh and ethereal – is a blend of Grand Cru Verzenay and Premier Cru Villers-Marmery, 50% of which is vinified in wood. Its aromas are lightly floral, followed by citrus elements and light breadiness; the texture is creamy but light in the mouth. Development in the glass reveals vanilla nougat and a subtle touch of aldehyde.

Wine 1 is .....

because .....

.....

Wine 2 is .....  
because .....

Further comments? .....

## SECOND PAIR

*Both are made by co-operative manipulants.*

Jacquart and Devaux are large co-operatives at opposite ends of Champagne, with Jacquart (800 winegrowers farming 2400 hectares) in Reims, and Devaux (900 growers with 1400 hectares of vineyards) in the Aube.<sup>1</sup> Both are members of the Alliance Champagne group, which controls a large Buyers Own Brand market.

The Devaux Rosée is Pinot Noir–dominant (20% Chardonnay from northern Champagne, 80% Aube Pinot Noir, which includes 15% red wine). Vinified in stainless steel, with full malolactic fermentation, it spends three years on its lees and has 10 g/L dosage from very old liqueured reserves stored in oak. Raspberry, aniseed and violet aromas precede the woodland notes; the palate is soft, fruity and creamy. Its colour is pale salmon. It has won many awards.

The Jacquart is 35–40% Chardonnay, 15–30% Meunier; the balance is Pinot Noir with 15–18% vinified as still red wine. This is the same blend as the much-praised Brut Mosaïque, except for the addition of the still red Pinot Noir. Full malolactic fermentation occurs and three years is spent years on lees. Aromas of redcurrants, cherries and piquant wild strawberries are followed by plum. In the mouth, the wine is fresh and full, finishing with notes of peach and apricot. Dosage is 10 g/L. Balanced and complex. Intense salmon pink.

Wine 3 could be .....  
because .....

Wine 4 might be .....  
because .....

## THIRD PAIR

*Both are Cuvées de Prestige, one producer a négociant and the other a récoltant manipulant.*

Please consult sources for the characteristics of your selected vintage.

Marc Hebrart is a grower from almost-Grand Cru Mareuil-sur-Aÿ. His 13.5 hectares of vines also include vineyards in Aÿ, Avenay Val d’Or, Bisseuil, and Grand Crus Chouilly and Oiry. He supplies some grapes to Bollinger. His Special Club (approximately 45% Oiry and Chouilly Chardonnay, 55% Mareuil-sur-Aÿ Pinot Noir) is a wine made for membership of the Club des Trésors, where like-minded growers try to outdo each other with their best in a selected bottling. The champagne has been described as rich, pure and intense, with a spicy complexity overridden by a pure minerality. Honey, malt and roses feature, with a long, salty finish. For full enjoyment allow it to breathe. The wine spends over four years on its lees, and has 7.5 g/L dosage.

Perle d’Ayala (approximately 80% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir) is the Cuvée de Prestige of Champagne Ayala, which was established in 1860 and is now owned by Bollinger. Its House style is light and delicate. Perle is sourced entirely from Grand Cru fruit. It is aged on cork exclusively to encourage the

development of complexity via very gentle oxidation. Perle is said to exhibit wild floral notes, which evolve quickly to honeyed complexity. Nutty aromas reveal themselves, together with a mélange of cooked pears and apricots, with subtle spice. The palate is rounded and the finish long. Dosage is 6.6 g/L. Disgorgement date is displayed on the bottle.

Wine 5 could be .....

because .....

Wine 6 might be .....

because .....

Finally, discuss your preferences and the difficulty (or ease) of the exercise.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Curien, Jean-Marie, *Le Guide Curien de la Champagne 2012–2013*, Société de Presse, Promotion, Relations Publiques, Edition et Distribution, Paris, 2011, p. 179.