

## Worksheet Twenty Eight

# VINTAGE CHAMPAGNE

Try to find two different vintage bottles of champagne from the same producer, so you can pinpoint the differences between years. A group should begin the tasting with a non-vintage champagne as a reference wine, tasted alongside the two vintage bottles, the younger one before the older. Drink any further vintages also younger to older, allowing time to consider the tertiary aromas that develop through age, and vintage variations.

For one or two people, a bottle of vintage champagne will suffice for this exercise.

Suggestions for the non-vintage reference wine: **Lanson Black Label** (generally 35% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir, 15% Meunier); **Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut** (generally 20% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Meunier); **Pommery Brut Royale** (generally 35% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 30% Meunier); or **Taittinger Reserve** (generally 40% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, 20% Meunier).

Vintage champagne, when compared to non-vintage, has had a lot longer to develop its complex tertiary aromas and flavours. Fresh fruit and flowers will certainly indicate a younger wine or a newer vintage wine.

Young vintage *blanc de blancs* will at first appear closed, light and delicate, tight and taut, yet balanced with firm, almost nervy, acidity. This last quality is an indication of the wine's suitability for further ageing on cork. Young blends which include Pinot Noir will show power, strength, structure, concentration and generosity, but also walk the balance line despite more pronounced acidity than *blanc de blancs*.

The vintage champagnes' aromas will be more linear – that is, they will tend to open one after the other – and, after exposure to oxygen, appear more intense than those of the non-vintage.

**Check the boxes, add your comments**

Name of champagne	Non-Vintage	Vintage 1 (younger)	Vintage 2 (older)
<b>Appearance</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
Fresh, floral, fruity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Developed fruit – cooked, dried, fruit cake	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Toasty, nutty	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Honey, toffee, caramel	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Smoky, gamey	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Intensity of aromas 1–10, where 10 is very intense			
Linearity			
<b>Flavour</b>			
Closely structured to aromas			

<b>Texture</b> <i>Lees time</i> shown by: degree of softness, creaminess, butteriness			
<b>Acidity</b> 1–10, where 10 tastes very freshly acidic			
<b>Balance</b> Strength of aroma/ flavour balanced by firm acidity, 1–10			
<b>Body</b> Comment			
<b>Complexity</b> 1–10, where 10 is very complex			
<b>Length</b> 1–10, where 10 is very long			
<b>Harmony</b> 1–10 where 10 is very harmonious			
<b>Perfection?</b> Comment			

Name of champagne	Vintage 3	Vintage 4	Vintage 5
<b>Appearance</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
Fresh, floral, fruity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Developed fruit – cooked, dried, fruit cake	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Toasty, nutty	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Honey, toffee, caramel	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Smoky, gamey	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Intensity of aromas 1–10, where 10 is very intense			
Linearity			

<b>Flavour</b> Closely structured to aromas			
<b>Texture</b> <i>Lees time</i> shown by: degree of softness, creaminess, butteriness			
<b>Acidity</b> 1-10, where 10 tastes very freshly acidic			
<b>Balance</b> Strength of aroma/ flavour balanced by firm acidity, 1-10			
<b>Body</b> Comment			
<b>Complexity</b> 1-10, where 10 is very complex			
<b>Length</b> 1-10, where 10 is very long			
<b>Harmony</b> 1-10 where 10 is very harmonious			
<b>Perfection?</b> Comment			