

Worksheet Three

FEELING THIRSTY

For this session, try to obtain any of the following champagnes:

1. A young non-vintage Champagne Ruinart or other *blanc de blancs* (100% Chardonnay), such as Billecart-Salmon, Delamotte or Henriot.
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2. A recent vintage *blanc de blancs*, for example Louis Roederer, Nicolas Feuillatte, Jacquesson Avize Grand Cru or Delamotte.
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3. A non-vintage champagne blend, such as Pol Roger, Mumm, Moët & Chandon, Pommery Royal, or Bollinger.
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4. A recently released vintage champagne blend, such as Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage, Nicolas Feuillatte Cuvée Spéciale or Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin Vintage.
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5. An older *blanc de blancs* vintage champagne, perhaps from one of the champagne Houses mentioned in selection 2, above.
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6. An older vintage champagne blend of two or more grape varieties.
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For fewer people, use fewer bottles of champagne; for a single taster, a half-bottle is a good option, and perhaps experiment with glassware when friends can help with tasting.

Use six identical glasses for an initial demonstration of glassware. You will then need another five glasses per taster. The first four glasses of the group of six should be prepared as follows:

- » One glass at room temperature washed in a dishwasher with detergent and rinsing agent.
- » One glass at room temperature washed in very hot water without detergent and, after multiple rinsings, dried with a dedicated fresh glass towel ('dish cloth' is the American term) or linen tea towel.
- » One still-warm glass that has been washed with dishwashing detergent in the kitchen sink and dried with your all-purpose multi-use kitchen towel.
- » One glass washed with dishwashing detergent in the kitchen sink, and dried with your all-purpose kitchen towel, then super-chilled.

Open the least expensive bottle of non-vintage champagne. Into each of the four glasses pour a small quantity of champagne. Observe which glass retains the best bubbles for the longest time. You will be surprised at the differences between the glasses. You will probably find that the glass at room temperature, after being washed in very hot water without detergent but with multiple rinsings, gives the best result. The ideal champagne glass is one that has been washed in a dedicated glass washer with multiple rinsings of hot water, dried with a lint-free cloth used for this purpose alone and then allowed to cool to room temperature.

Next, take the remaining two glasses, which should have been washed in very hot water with multiple rinsings, dried with a dedicated glass tea towel and allowed to cool gently. Pour champagne into the first glass, using the traditional method of upright glass poured from a tilted bottle. Then, tilt the second glass to meet the pouring stream – taking care that the neck of the bottle does not come into contact with the top of the glass.

Observe the foaminess and retained *bead* (effervescence) in the two glasses, and decide your preference. Convention once was that champagne should be poured holding the bottle at its base, into an upright glass, but the latest research in Champagne tells us what beer drinkers have known for a long time – tilt your glass to receive and you will conserve the froth.¹ It definitely looks more elegant to clasp the bottle by its base as you pour, and you will find that it is easy when you put the base of the bottle in the flat palm of your dominant hand, and insert your thumb into the depression, known as the punt, at the bottom of the bottle. If using a napkin, ensure that the label is not hidden but visible at the correct angle, and therefore enticing to the prospective drinker.

Experiment with different types of glassware. Coloured glass prevents you seeing the exciting bubbles of champagne – thus removing visual clues in a blind tasting. Old-fashioned bowl-style coupes retain neither bouquet nor bead, as the large surface area tends to dissipate both quickly. Modern tulip-shaped champagne glassware often features a nucleation point in the interior base of the glass, to assist in a good display of effervescence.

Pour a tasting amount of about 15 ml of non-vintage champagne into a traditional wine glass, the same amount into a large-bowled wine glass and, finally, into a champagne tulip-shaped glass or flute. There will be marked differences in the bouquet, bubbles and overall experience depending on the glass. Champagne demands its own unique theatre, so be sure to take note of the serving tips in this chapter, and make the whole experience as special as what is in the bottle.

Holding the glass by the stem keeps the contents cool.

For the first champagne you taste, tick all words that apply. For subsequent champagnes, write the most appropriate words.

Champagne Clarity & Condition Colour & Hue Mousse & Cordon

1	<input type="checkbox"/> Brilliant <input type="checkbox"/> Crystalline <input type="checkbox"/> Limpid <input type="checkbox"/> Translucent <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly hazy <input type="checkbox"/> Dull <input type="checkbox"/> An incorrect colour <input type="checkbox"/> Brown <input type="checkbox"/> Oxidised <input type="checkbox"/> Watery	Colour <input type="checkbox"/> Pale straw <input type="checkbox"/> Straw <input type="checkbox"/> Straw yellow <input type="checkbox"/> Light yellow or lemon <input type="checkbox"/> Pale gold <input type="checkbox"/> Green-gold <input type="checkbox"/> Grey-gold <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-gold <input type="checkbox"/> Rich or antique gold Hue <input type="checkbox"/> Green <input type="checkbox"/> Rosy	Mousse <input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Slight <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Fleeting <input type="checkbox"/> Light <input type="checkbox"/> Fine <input type="checkbox"/> Creamy <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> Sparkling <input type="checkbox"/> Lively <input type="checkbox"/> Plentiful <input type="checkbox"/> Generous <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent Bead size <input type="checkbox"/> Tiny <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Large Cordon <input type="checkbox"/> Discreet <input type="checkbox"/> Intense
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2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Tiny bubbles indicate that the champagne has had an extra-long rest on its yeast residues. Slow bubbles show that the champagne is either very cold or older than usual. Young champagnes have speedy, fast-flowing bubbles and are usually lighter in colour than older ones. What have you observed about your sample, and what is your conclusion?

Larger, fleeting bubbles are a sign of lesser quality. Does any champagne fit this unfortunate category?

Older champagnes have fewer, smaller bubbles. Which champagne might be from the oldest bottle?

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.wikihow.com/Pour-a-Glass-of-Champagne> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/food/article-1302481/French-scientists-work-pour-perfect-glass-champagne-tilt-glass.html>