

Worksheet Thirty One

HOW CHAMPAGNE AGES; NON-VINTAGE COMPARED TO VINTAGE; LATE DISGORGED CHAMPAGNE; MELLOW MALO

Old wines, including champagne, are delicate. If you have an old bottle of champagne, it may not require the aeration time suitable for young vintage and non-vintage champagne. Solo tasters might like to try the oldest bottle that can be found and explore it for signs of its age.

- » Assess the difference between champagne that has not undergone MLF and one where the House style specifies MLF: **Lanson Black Label NV** and **Duval-Leroy Brut NV**, for example, or vintage champagnes from the same year, **Pol Roger** and **Lanson**, or **Billecart-Salmon** and **Besserat de Bellefon**.
- » To assess the difference between a young Blanc de Blancs (albeit a non-vintage with reserves) and an older one, try **Zoémie de Sousa Brut 'Précieuse' Blanc de Blancs NV** or **Louis Roederer Vintage** paired with **Delamotte Vintage**. Note: Louis Roederer is always a younger release than Delamotte, and usually does not undergo MLF.
- » To assess the difference between vintage champagne and late-disgorged vintage, compare **Bollinger Vintage** with the same year **Bollinger Vintage R.D.** or **Jacquesson Vintage** with the same year **Jacquesson Vintage D.T.** or **Dom Pérignon Vintage** with **Dom Pérignon Oenothèque** or **P2** or old champagne from your cellar with young wine of the same brand.

The first worksheet below examines age and the influence or not of MLF. It is for a lone or couple taster. At a later time, you might like to choose two half-bottles and complete the MLF vs. non-MLF worksheet. A half-bottle each of Pol Roger and Lanson would be ideal for this purpose.

EXPLORING AGE ON CHAMPAGNE

Taste an aged bottle and select the most appropriate words from the table below. Words describing young champagne have been excluded.

Solo Taster's name of champagne Year

Appearance	
Colour: pale gold, green gold, grey gold, yellow gold, rich/ antique gold, dark gold, brown (if brown, smell before continuing)	
Clarity: correct, hazy, dull, murky (too old, proceed no further and choose another bottle)	
Mousse: flat, slight, slow, fleeting, light, fine, creamy, adequate, sparkling, lively, plentiful. Tiny bead?	

Aromas	
Intense, complex, subtle, powerful, perfumed, appealing, clean, pleasant, lacking complexity and intensity, light, undeveloped, flat, faulty, detectable oxidation, cork taint, sulphurous	
Primary nose: fruit, flowers, spice, mineral	
Secondary nose: tropical fruit, fresh nuts, cooked stone fruit, doughy, bready, biscuity, savoury (dependent on lees time, etc.)	
Tertiary nose: honey, beeswax, toffee, vanilla, nougat, marzipan, toast, brown butter, pastries, fruit cake, grilled nuts, cooked and candied primary and secondary nose fruit; cooked and dried stone fruit, especially apricot; fig, raisin, citrus zest, smoke, mushroom, truffle, forest floor, chocolate, coffee, tobacco, cold tea, leather, beef stock, polish, spices, sherry	
No MLF: fresh fruit, crisp pleasant acidity	
MLF: cream, butter, cheese, butterscotch, yoghurt, caramel, softness	
Taste	
The Attack (acidity, dosage, balance): austere, severe, crisp, fresh, juicy, lively, chewy, rough, tough, loose, flat, syrupy, cloying	
Balanced, lively, vibrant; harmonious; soft, bland	
Savoury, dry, medium dry, fruit-sweet, confectionery-sweet	
Mouthfeel: light, silky, creamy, satiny, cushiony, caressing, round, ample, fleshy	
Weight: light, medium, full-bodied	
Intensity: invasive, powerful, solid, mature, opulent, luscious, sumptuous, mouth-filling, comforting, smooth, spritzy, discreet, light, fine, watery	
Flavour: subtle, elegant, refined, mineral, complex, buttery, powerful, faulty	
Finish	
Aftertaste: good flavour development, bitter, sharp, crisp, acidic, dull, flat, cloying, sour, clean, dirty, tannic, phenolic (wood), oaky, poor.	
Length: abrupt, short (3 seconds), lingering, persistent (10 seconds), exceptional (15 seconds)	
Quality & General Impression	
Outstanding, distinguished, memorable; powerful, sense of plenitude, luxury; elegant, great lightness and finesse, crisp and lingering	
Lovely, gorgeous, delicious, sensational	
Enjoyable, good commercial style	
Well made, with good true-to-type character	
Sound, interesting, average, but not memorable; poor, flawed, faulty	

QUESTIONS

Did your champagne taste too old for you?

Was your champagne in the Top Ten that you have ever tasted?

If not, was it in the Top Fifty? Top Hundred?

Was it worth storing? Was it good value?

MLF, NON-MLF

Date

Names of the champagne pair

and

Appearance		
Colour: pale gold, green gold, grey gold, yellow gold, rich/ antique gold, dark gold, brown (if brown, smell before continuing)		
Clarity: correct, hazy, dull, murky (too old, proceed no further and choose another bottle)		
Mousse: flat, slight, slow, fleeting, light, fine, creamy, adequate, sparkling, lively, plentiful. Tiny bead?		
Aromas		
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Secondary nose: tropical fruit, fresh nuts, cooked stone fruit, doughy, bready, biscuity, savoury (dependent on lees time, etc.)		
Tertiary nose: honey, beeswax, toffee, vanilla, nougat, marzipan, toast, brown butter, pastries, fruit cake, grilled nuts, cooked and candied primary and secondary nose fruit; cooked and dried stone fruit, especially apricot; fig, raisin, citrus zest, smoke, spices, mushroom, truffle, forest floor, chocolate, coffee, sherry, tobacco, cold tea, leather, beef stock, polish		
No MLF: fresh fruit, crisp pleasant acidity		
MLF: cream, butter, cheese, butterscotch, yoghurt, caramel, softness		
Taste		
The Attack (acidity, dosage, balance): austere, severe, crisp, fresh, juicy, lively, chewy, rough, tough, loose, flat, syrupy, cloying		
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Sound, interesting, average, but not memorable; poor, flawed, faulty		

OLDER AND YOUNGER BLANC DE BLANCS

Date

Names of the champagne pair

and

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Clarity: correct, hazy, dull, murky (too old, proceed no further and choose another bottle)		
Mousse: flat, slight, slow, fleeting, light, fine, creamy, adequate, sparkling, lively, plentiful. Tiny bead?		
Aromas		
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Primary nose: fruit, flowers, spice, mineral		
Secondary nose: tropical fruit, fresh nuts, cooked stone fruit, doughy, bready, biscuity, savoury (dependent on lees time, etc.)		
Tertiary nose: honey, beeswax, toffee, vanilla, nougat, marzipan, toast, brown butter, pastries, fruit cake, grilled nuts, cooked and candied primary and secondary nose fruit; cooked and dried stone fruit, especially apricot; fig, raisin, citrus zest, smoke, spices, mushroom, truffle, forest floor, chocolate, coffee, sherry, tobacco, cold tea, leather, beef stock, polish		
No MLF: fresh fruit, crisp pleasant acidity		
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CORK AGE COMPARED TO RECENTLY DISGORGED, OR YOUNG AND AGED

Date

Names of the champagne pair

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Did any of your champagnes taste too old for you?

Which?

Was any of your champagne in the Top Ten that you have ever tasted?

Which?

If not, were any in the Top Fifty? Top Hundred?

Which?

Do you like the effect of age?

Were they all value for your money?

If you could only choose one to drink on a desert island, which one would it be?

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And for everyday drinking?

Further Comments

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