

## Worksheet Nine

# LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY

Prepare one bottle of Pommery Brut Royale NV as a reference standard to compare against four or five of the suggested champagnes. Have a large clock with a second hand visible for the participants in the tasting session, to count the seconds of palate length. Have bread or crackers available, and water, to help clean the tongue of the prior champagne between tastes.

For one or two people, wait until you have two consecutive evenings free, or seek half bottles. Open the Pommery and one other of the suggested champagnes. Assess the Pommery side by side with your selection, and do the same the following night. Exposure to air does interesting things to all wines – so do not be surprised if you find even more complexity and length in both champagnes on the second evening.

- » Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Vintage
- » Bollinger Special Cuvée NV Brut
- » Gosset Grande Rosé NV
- » Henriot Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Vintage
- » Dom Pérignon Vintage
- » Krug Grande Cuvée MV

This worksheet's champagnes achieve their complexity and length by various means. Compare the later champagnes with the Pommery and you will find differing complexities and gradations of length to enjoy.

### **Pommery Brut Royale NV**

*35% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 30% Meunier*

From the second largest champagne House, the wine is vinified in stainless steel. It has had 15 months' lees time. Most of the grapes and juice are purchased from growers, as the vineyards were sold during a takeover.

### **Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Vintage**

*100% Chardonnay*

It originates with grapes from carefully tended vineyards owned by the House of Roederer, from two exceptional Grands Crus, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger and Avize. 15–20% of the Chardonnay *cuvée* is matured in oak casks, with weekly *bâtonnage*. Malolactic fermentation is avoided. The champagne is then matured for five years on its lees in the cellars, and for a further six months after disgorgement.

### **Bollinger Special Cuvée NV Brut**

*25% Chardonnay, 60% Pinot Noir, 15% Meunier*

Grapes for this Special Cuvée are sourced from 30 *crus*, approximately 75% of which are Bollinger's own vineyards; in all, 80% of the *crus* are either Grand or Premier class. The grapes are picked later than usual to maximise ripeness. The first fermentation is done *cru-by-cru*, grape variety by grape variety, to preserve the unique characteristics of the vines' locations. Small tanks are used for fermentation, to improve control of the process. All reserve wine fermentation is in oak barrels. The reserve wines, from up to seven different wines – all Grand and Premier Crus stored under cork in magnums – contribute 5–10% of the blend. The Special Cuvée spends an exceptional three years on its lees, which contributes to its complexity. After disgorgement it spends six months on cork before shipping.

## Gosset Grande Rosé NV

*56% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, plus 9% Bouzy and Ambonnay still red wine*

Created as a blend of two years' harvests, the grapes are sourced as juice from trusted long-term (three-generation) Premier and Grand Cru growers in the Marne Valley. Each batch is fermented separately, then remains separate until blending. The techniques used to build this wine's complexity and length are: partial fermentation in oak; no malolactic fermentation; no filtering until bottling; four years on its lees; manual riddling; and up to one year on cork.

## Henriot Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Vintage

*Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, exact blend not disclosed*

This is named after the cellar workers who once stacked the barrels containing the wines on *chantiers*, barrel stands. The grapes are primarily sourced from six Grand Cru villages – Mailly, Verzy, Verzenay, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Avize and Chouilly – and the wine is only made in the very best years. Small stainless steel vats keep each batch separate for fermentation. After blending, the wine is not bottled until a year after harvest to improve the quality of the blend, then it spends a minimum of twelve years on lees. Refer to the Henriot website for current tasting notes.

## Dom Pérignon Vintage

*Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, exact blend not disclosed*

Perfect grapes from the mid-slope of eight Grand Cru villages, plus fruit from very old vines in Hautvillers, are picked to be as fresh as possible. Fermentation is in stainless steel with special Dom Pérignon yeasts, and includes malolactic fermentation. Kept away from oxygen to give reductive flavours, the wine spends seven years on its lees.

## Krug Grande Cuvée Multi-Vintage (MV)

*35–45% Chardonnay, 45–55% Pinot Noir, 15–20% Meunier*

One cannot use the words 'length' and 'complexity' without mentioning Krug. The best grapes for the Krug style are sourced regardless of *échelle des crus*. Krug owns a minority of the vineyards it requires, but growers who have supplied it for generations are proud to continue to do so. This MV wine is a blend of the best vintages, sourced from up to 120 separately vinified wines and from up to 10 different vintages. It is partly fermented in old, 205 litre oak barrels without malolactic fermentation, then blended with individually preserved reserve wines, stored in stainless steel for up to 15 years. Time on lees is a minimum of five years.

Pour your tastings in pairs and, as you taste between each champagne, note as many aromas and flavours as possible. Then score the wines 1–6 for complexity, where 6 signifies the wine with the largest number of different aromas and flavours and 1 is the wine with least.

For length, count by the French *caudalie*, which is derived from the Latin word for tail (*cauda*), each *caudalie* being one second of time in which you can still taste the wine. Twenty seconds displays great length. At least one champagne label is named after this characteristic – the Chardonnay-inspired de Sousa's Des Caudalies range.

Champagne Name	Aromas & Flavours	Complexity (1-6)	Caudalies
Pommery Brut Royale NV			

Which champagne seems the most complex? .....

Which seems the hardest to describe? .....

Which champagne do you like most? .....

Select one of the champagnes ..... and describe:

**Appearance**

Colour ..... Clarity .....

Bead ..... Mousse .....

Cordon .....

**Aromas**

Floral .....

Fruity .....

Developed fruit .....

Wood or reserves influence (aldehydic) .....

Fermentation (autolytic) .....

Extended lees time (reductive) .....

Other .....

**Taste**

Flavour apparent from aromas .....

.....

Texture .....

**Length** .....

**Complexity** .....

**General Impression of Quality** .....

.....

.....