



Champagne Club! Fall 2015

Welcome to the latest edition of the Caveau Champagne Club – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of some of the most fascinating sparkling wines on earth – **Grower Champagnes**.

This club functions just like our **Burgundy Club** (*and if you're not already a member, call us at 503-679-6233*). The wines in each 6-bottle shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Champagne seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines and enjoy them. Whichever path you choose – there's lots of good bubbly in your future!



A nice glass of Rosé in the tasting room at Forget-Chemin

Rosé Champagne

This shipment is a detailed study of **Rosé Champagne** – the sublime bubbles with that beautiful pale salmon color. Rosés account for less than 5% of Champagne production, but can be some of the most complex and exciting bottles made. For those of you new to the club, or if you just want to brush up, we'll review the Champagne basics first. If you're already up to speed on all that, feel free to skip ahead to all the info specific to this shipment...

Grower Champagne

We import exclusively, and this club features exclusively, **Grower Champagne**. Grower Champagnes are simply wines produced *100% from vineyards that are owned by the producer*. It may surprise you to learn that over 88% of Champagne is **Negociant Champagne** – meaning that the wines are made with grapes purchased from dozens to hundreds of different growers from throughout the region.

The big names that you are likely familiar with – Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Mumm, Roederer, etc. – those are negociants. They produce millions of cases of wine, in an industrial fashion, from fruit grown mostly not by themselves, but by thousands of smaller growers across the 319 villages that make up the Champagne viticultural region.

Grower Champagnes, on the other hand, are made by small, family producers, growing grapes and making wines exclusively from their own vineyards. This is analogous to the small, family estates of Burgundy. The typical Grower Champagne producer makes fewer than 5,000 cases per year (in fact less than a dozen make more than 6,000 cases). There are nearly 5,000 of these small grower-producers in Champagne, *but fewer than 250 of them are available here in the U.S.!*

Most negociant Champagne is mass-produced, often over-priced, and can be quite lacking in character. (A very small portion of it however, is outstanding, and in fact can be among the best in all of Champagne.) Negociant Champagne is hugely successful, and is certainly the world's most celebrated wine. Unfortunately, most of it just isn't very good. They produce 88% of the wine, but own only 12% of the vineyards. Their production methods are designed to bring the wines down to a lowest common denominator. Hence our motto – ***“Friends don't let friends drink negociant Champagne!”***

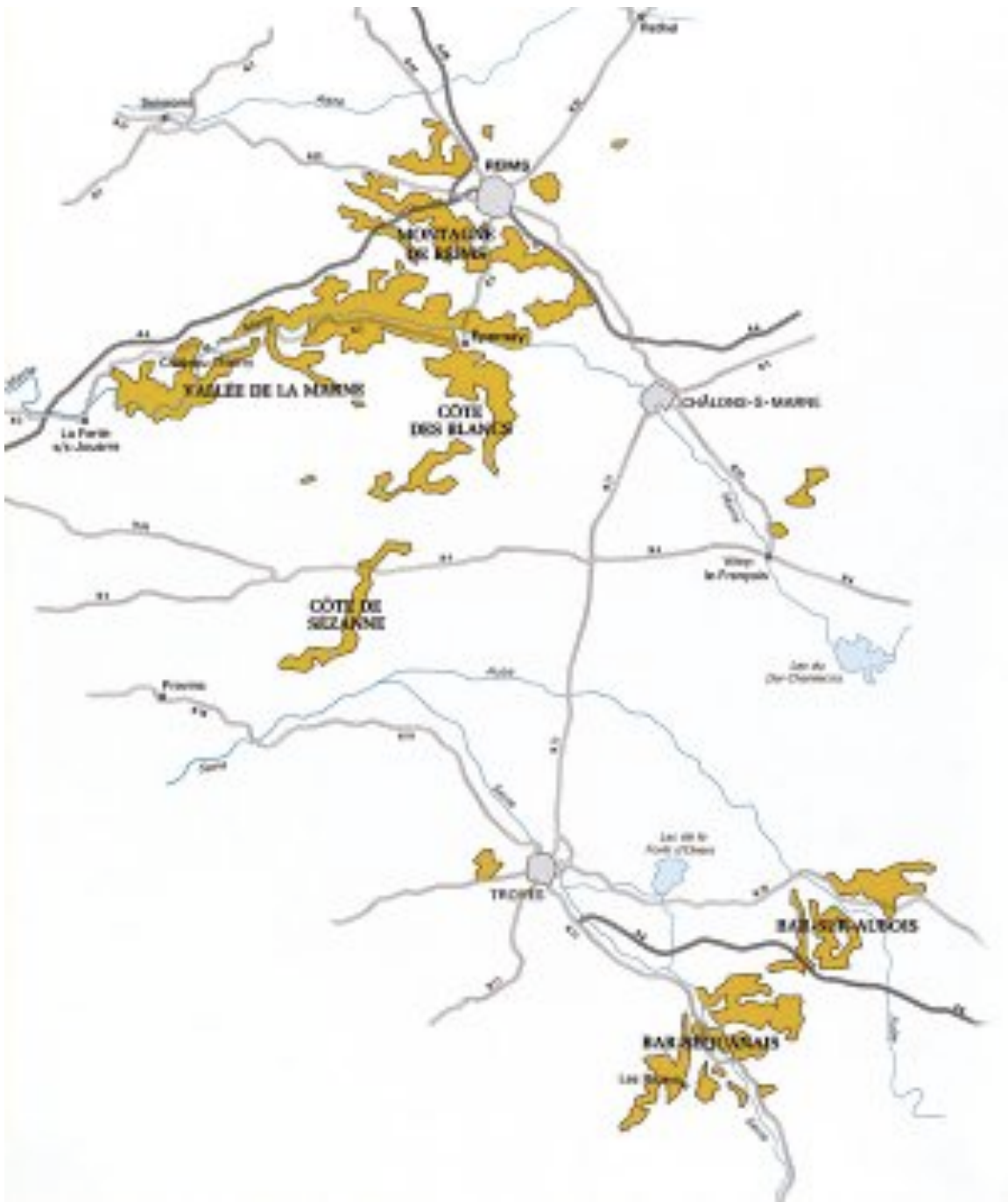


Champagne 101

- Champagne is the largest AOC (**A**ppellation d'**O**rigine **C**ontrôlée) in France. It covers a whopping 76,000 acres of vineyards, across 319 small villages and towns. Only wine made from this delimited area can be called Champagne. Sparkling wine made from other regions in France carries the appellation *Crémant*.
- There are nearly 20,000 vineyard owners in Champagne. Only about 5,000 of them produce wine from the grapes they grow. The other 15,000 sell all of their grapes to the large negociant houses.
- There are five distinct sub-regions of Champagne:
- **Montagne de Reims** – Encompasses several villages surrounding the city of Reims (pronounced “Rance”). Pinot Noir is the predominant grape grown here, but there is significant Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier as well.
- **Vallée de la Marne** – Many villages strung along the Marne river, which cuts across Champagne from East to West. The largest percentage of acreage is planted to Pinot Meunier.
- **Côte des Blancs** – As the name suggests, this is white grape territory. Virtually everything in this sub-region is Chardonnay.
- **Côte de Sezanne** – A region on the rise. All three grapes are grown here.
- **The Aube (or the Côte des Bar)** – An area on the rise, with a new generation of quality-focused growers emerging. This is where much of the most exciting, cutting-edge Champagne is coming from. The first three regions

listed above account for the vast majority of Champagne production, though the Côte de Sezanne and the Aube are growing rapidly.

Below is a map with a good overview of the entirety of the Champagne appellation.



- **Vineyard classification** is radically different in Champagne than in Burgundy. In Burgundy, it is each individual piece of vineyard land that is classified. In Champagne, the *entire village* is classified – every vineyard within the boundaries of a village is given the same classification (though in fact certain sites within the village are clearly better than others, so this is a seriously imperfect system).
- Each village is given a numerical rating, on a scale of 100 percentage points. Champagne village ratings are as follows:
 - **Grand Cru** – Villages rated 100%
 - **Premier Cru** – Villages rated 90-99%
 - **Deuxième Cru** - Villages rated 80-89%

There are only 17 Grand Cru villages. The most familiar names among them would be *Bouzy, Ambonnay, Oger, and le Mesnil-sur-Oger*.

The percentage points refer to the price paid for grapes from each village by the negociants. Say the top-line price for a ton of Pinot Noir is set at \$4,000 for this vintage. If you were selling grapes from a vineyard in a Grand Cru village, you would receive 100% of that price, the full \$4,000. If you were selling grapes from a Premier Cru village rated at 95%, you would receive 95% of the top price, or \$3,800 in this case.

There are three main grape varieties grown in Champagne:

Pinot Noir – which accounts for 37.5% of all plantings

Chardonnay – which accounts for 27.5%

Pinot Meunier – which accounts for 35%

- Additionally, there are four “other” grapes allowed in Champagne, but they are rarely seen today. They are – *Fromenteau, Petit Meslier, Arbanne, and Pinot Blanc*
- Pinot Meunier is a grape little seen outside of Champagne. It is extremely valuable as a blending grape, and adds lovely aromatics and light-bodied fruit to the wines, but is not often used on its own, neither in Champagne nor in still wine.

- Most Champagne is a blend of two or more of the varieties, though some are made from only one of the grape varieties.
- There are four main categories of wine in Champagne –
 - “**Champagne**” – made from a blend of two or three of the grape varieties, using both colors – i.e. Chardonnay and at least one of the two Pinot varieties
 - “**Blanc de Blancs**” – made exclusively from white grapes – i.e. 100% Chardonnay
 - “**Blanc de Noirs**” – made exclusively from the red (also known as “black”) grapes, either singly or a combination of the two.
 - “**Rosé**” – made from any combination of two or three of the varieties. The pink color is obtained either by blending in a portion of red still-wine, or by letting a portion of the juice macerate with the skins of red grapes.
- But it’s all “white”! Yes, it is. It’s import to remember that the juice from all wine grapes is clear – it is only if you let the skins soak together with the juice that one gets any color from the “red” wine grapes. For Champagne, the Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes are treated just like the Chardonnay, in that the juice is pressed out immediately, and the juice is never in contact with the skins. Hence, “white” wine from red grapes.
- In addition to the four main categories of Champagne listed above, there is another classification based on the amount of residual sugar in the wine. (We’ll explain in detail later the mechanics of this. For now just know that at the end of the winemaking process, varying amounts of sugar are added to most Champagnes.)
- The Seven Levels of Sweetness (or **Dryness**, as the case may be):
 - **Brut Nature** (Also known as Brut Zero, Ultra Brut, Brut Sauvage) – less than 3 grams per liter
 - **Extra Brut** – Less than 6 grams/liter
 - **Brut** – Less than 12 grams/liter
 - **Extra-sec** – 12-20 grams/liter

- **Sec** – 17-35 grams/liter
- **Demi-sec** – 33-50 grams/liter
- **Doux** – 50+ grams/liter

In addition to all of the above classifications and categories, Champagnes also fall into one of the two following designations –

VINTAGE – A vintage Champagne is primarily, and sometimes entirely, from grapes grown in only one year. The appellation laws require a vintage-dated wine to be a minimum of 85% from the stated vintage – the other 15% can be from one or more other vintages. A producer may produce a vintage wine from whatever vintages he or she wishes – though most will not make vintage wine in the lesser quality years. It is up to the individual producer to decide whether a vintage wine will be produced in a given year. Vintage wines must age a minimum of three years prior to release. Only 10-15% of all Champagne is vintage-dated.

NON-VINTAGE – 85-90% of all Champagne is non-vintage, meaning that the wine is a blend from grapes grown in two or more years. It is often said that the essence of non-vintage Champagne is the art of blending – using many different components and building blocks to arrive at a consistent flavor profile and character (or lack thereof).

History

Before we dive into the winemaking process, let's take a look at a little history.

- Champagne hasn't always been a sparkling wine! Until the late 1600s, Champagne was exclusively a still red wine, made from the Pinot Noir grape. (Thus making Champagne a major competitor to Burgundy. The two regions were in fact bitter enemies throughout the centuries.)
- *Dom Perignon*, the monk widely credited for "inventing" Champagne (and now a brand-name used by Moët et Chandon for their luxury brand), was actually charged with the mission to "stop the bubbles" from happening in the wines! He was the cellarmaster at the Abbey of Hautvillers in the late 1600s, when the monks grew tired of losing 15-25% of their wines every year to unwanted fermentations that were occurring in the bottle. (The bottles were literally exploding in the cellars.) Instead of "stopping" the bubbles, Dom Perignon figured out how to control the process. His biggest contributions were coming up with the use of corks to close the bottles, which replaced the hemp-rag shoved into the bottle neck with a plug of wood, and he championed the art of blending – different grapes and villages, to make the most harmonious cuvée.

Méthode Champenois

The *Méthode Champenois* is the intricate, expensive, time-intensive and labor intensive process by which all Champagne is made. There are of course many others ways to make sparkling wine – but none of them produce results with anywhere near the quality of this method. It was arrived at by trial and error, like all winemaking practices over the centuries. The main point of difference from any other method is that wine produced this way *undergoes a second alcoholic fermentation in the bottle* – thus each bottle is its own unique fermentation vessel. Here's a step-by-step look at the process...

All grapes are harvested by hand – picking machines are not allowed. The grapes are pressed as soon as possible after picking. The press is filled with whole bunches of grapes, and the clear juice is pressed out directly into tanks

The juice from the first pressing, the best quality juice, is in Champagne lingo called the *Cuvée*. Most grower Champagnes use only this top quality juice. Lesser quality juice from the 2nd pressing is called the *Taille*, and is often used by the large negociants in their mass-market bottlings. A third pressing produces an even lower quality juice that is called the *2ème Taille* – and is only used in the French equivalent of André's Cold Duck.

Débourbage. The juice is chilled to about 38 degrees, and allowed to settle for a day or two, in order to clarify the juice and to separate the juice from any solids

The clear juice is then transferred into temperature controlled tanks for fermentation. Most grower Champagne is allowed to ferment using only the wild, indigenous yeasts, while most negociant Champagne is inoculated with cultured, commercial yeast. A cool fermentation (at 65-68 degrees) ensues, lasting 3-10 days. (A very tiny amount of Champagne is fermented in oak barrels – only a small percentage of producers employ this technique.)

Champagne grapes at harvest rarely exceed 10-11% potential alcohol due to the extremely cool climate in which they're grown. If the grapes were harvested at lower potential alcohol levels, the producer may chaptalize – add sugar to the juice during fermentation – to bring the alcohol level up to 10.5-11% when fermentation completes.

After the primary alcoholic fermentation, malolactic fermentation is allowed to happen in most cases. Malolactic fermentation is a naturally occurring process that converts the sharp, crisp malic acid – the acid that's in apples, into the softer lactic acid – the acid that's in milk. Some producers choose to block the malolactic fermentation, preferring to keep their wines higher in acidity.

When the malolactic fermentation is complete, you then have a very acidic and not so pleasant tasting base wine, called the **Vin Clair**. At this stage it tastes green, harsh, and fairly astringent. It is hard to believe that it will one day be transformed into the delightful beauty that we know as Champagne!

Next comes the **assemblage** – the blending of different *Vins Clairs*, selecting how much Chardonnay, or Pinot Noir, or Pinot Meunier to use in the blend (the different grapes are pressed and fermented separately), how much wine from this vintage, how much from previous vintages, etc.

Then the final blend is put into bottles. A calculation is made as to how much sugar needs to be added to bring the alcohol level to approx. 12% after the next fermentation.

Now the **Liqueur de Tirage** is added to the bottled wine. This is a blend of sugar, yeast, and wine. The bottle is closed with a crown cap – like on a bottle of beer or Coke. The bottles are then laid on their sides – **sur lattes** – in a cool (50-55F) cellar, and the second fermentation occurs in the bottle – a process that is simply the yeasts eating the sugar, which produces CO₂ and alcohol. This second fermentation, called the **Prise de Mousse**, will take about three months. The alcohol level will rise to about 12% after this fermentation.



Stacking the bottles sur-lattes for fermentation

When the second fermentation is finished, a sticky sludge of dead yeast cells will have dropped out of the liquid and attached itself to the walls of the bottle.

The process called **Rémouage**, or Riddling is next – slowly and methodically turning the bottles several times per day and tilting them at increasing angles, so eventually the bottles are fully upside down, and all of the yeast sediment has moved and settled onto the inside of the crown cap. Done by hand, this process takes 8-12 weeks. Mechanical gyro- palletes can now do the riddling in about 7 days – and most negociants do all of their riddling mechanically these days. Many growers still do it by hand, or at the very least for their top of the line bottlings and all of their magnums and large formats.



Riddling by hand



Riddling by gyro-palette



Dead yeast in the bottle neck near the end of remouage

Once the yeast sediment has finally all moved onto the cap, the bottles are stored on their heads – **sur pointes** – and aged for a minimum of 12 more months for non-vintage Champagne, or about 30 months minimum for the vintage stuff.

The producers may choose to age their wines much longer than the minimum. The longer the wine ages on its lees – the yeast sediment – the more richness and flavor development will occur. Some top bottlings are aged 10+ years before release. When the decision has been made to release the wine, first the yeasty sludge needs to be removed from the bottle. But how do you do that?

It's an ingenious process called *Dégorgement* – or Disgorging. The bottles are placed neck-down for just a minute or so into a solution of freezing brine. This freezes the yeast sediment along with the first inch or so of liquid in the neck. And turns it into a firm, slushy pellet.



The frozen pellet, just prior to disgorging

Then the crown cap is removed. And the slushy pellet (along with a few drops of wine) is forced out of the bottle by the pressure of the CO₂ gas in the wine.

Then, immediately after the ejection of the pellet, the **Liqueur d'Expédition** is added – otherwise known as the **Dosage**. This is the slurry of Brandy or wine and Cane Sugar that determines the level of sweetness in the Champagne – as detailed above in the Seven Levels of Sweetness.

And finally the Champagne is corked, the wire cage is applied to make sure the cork stays in, and the bottle is foiled, labeled, boxed, and readied for shipment.

The disgorging, addition of the Liqueur d'Expédition, and the corking-foiling-labeling process is all done at the same time on an automated line, ensuring consistency from bottle to bottle. (Consistency used to be a huge problem in the past, when all of these processes were carried out by hand, a practice that continued until the 1970s.)

The finished product is a bottle that contains between 40 million and 250 million bubbles – the product of all the CO₂ gas trapped in the wine from the in-bottle fermentation. When the cork is popped, the bubbles are released (and the party has begun)!

Other than that, it's a pretty simple process!



Looking down over Cumières in the Vallée de la Marne

Rosé Champagne

Most Champagne is “white”, essentially all of it except for Rosé Champagne, which accounts for less than 5% of total production. A Rosé Champagne can be made from any combination of Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay, or may be from just a single variety (although obviously one could not produce a rosé exclusively from Chardonnay).

While it only makes up a bit less than 5% of all Champagne produced, the rosés are immensely popular with Champagne aficionados. I find that many casual drinkers are often not aware that such a thing as Rosé Champagne exists. It may be little known, there may be little of it, but it is one of the great treasures in the world of wine – especially the hand-crafted, artisanal Rosés from top Grower producers (such as the six bottles you’ve received in this shipment).

Rosé Champagne has exploded in popularity, having grown over 700% in the US in the last 10 years. Prior to that time much of Rosé Champagne was industrially produced and overly sweet, and not well-known or highly regarded. The rise in popularity and quality of Rosé Champagne has coincided with the vastly increased availability of Grower Champagnes in this country.



There are as many different styles of Rosé Champagne as there are shades of pink, and in this shipment you have examples of many different styles, from grapes grown in different sub-regions of Champagne. They can run from lush and slightly sweet to crisp and minerally and even austere. They can be the palest salmon color to bubble-gum pink, and everything in between.

What most of them have in common is that they are flat-out fantastic with food. Roast chicken, pork loins, sushi, grilled salmon, smoked salmon, sausages, charcuterie, a wide array of cheeses, the list is nearly endless. It’s true that some Rosé Champagnes are better as an apéritif, but the really good ones in my view are made to go with food. You may have heard me go on at length about how Champagne is one of the world’s most food-friendly wines, and that it should not

just be thought of as a “celebratory beverage”. That goes double when it comes to Rosé Champagne – these are wines that absolutely live to be on your dinner table with great food. Give it a try!

Making Rosé Champagne

So, if most Champagne is “white” wine from red grapes, how does a Rosé become a Rosé?

There are two different methods of making a Rosé Champagne, and we’ll explain and explore them both.

The first is called a **Rosé de Saignée** (pronounced sen-yay). Rather than pressing the juice out of the grapes immediately and never letting the juice come in contact with the skins, in this method the red grapes (Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier, or a combination of the two) are allowed to sit and macerate with the juice from the grapes that have been gently pressed, thus “bleeding” some color from the skins into the juice. (Saignée is the French word for bleeding.)

The grapes can be left to mingle with the juice for a variable amount of time, from just a couple hours to overnight. The length of maceration determines how much color is extracted from the skins, and thus will play a part in determining the final color of the wine. A **Rosé de Saignée** that is very pale salmon-colored was likely macerated for just a few hours with the skins, for example. The winemaker could be planning to blend this colored juice with some “white” juice from his Chardonnay grapes as well, so he would need to take that into consideration when deciding how long to “bleed” his Pinot.

Once the color, flavors, and aromas of the juice are to the winemaker’s liking, the juice will then go into tank or barrel for the first fermentation, and the rest of the process proceeds as with all other non-rosé Champagnes.

The second method for making Rosé Champagne is called a **Rosé d’Assemblage** – a rosé of “assembly”. These rosés are made by taking some of the Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier grapes (or both), and fermenting them WITH the skins, as you would to make a regular Pinot Noir, or any red still wine. The resulting RED wine is then blended into white wine that was produced from pressing and fermenting Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier or Chardonnay (or any combination of the three, individually or collectively). The amount of red wine added to the blend is a stylistic choice of the producer. The final blend is then put into bottle for the second fermentation and the rest of the process continues as with all other Champagnes.



Laherte Frères makes both types of Rosé

As you might expect, these two methods produce wines that are very different in overall character. Generally speaking, a **Rosé de Saignée** will be lighter bodied, more elegant and ethereal, and often paler in color, but there are exceptions to all of these, of course. The wines made in the **Rosé d'Assemblage** method are likely to be fuller-bodied, richer, more intense, more savory, and often exhibit more than a trace of “red wine” qualities. (Perhaps because they do indeed contain some true “red wine”). **But there are many contradictory examples – in the end it comes down to the producer and their intention and stylistic goal.**

Where the grapes were grown -the *terroir* - of course comes in to play as well. As we've seen in previous shipments, there are distinct differences in the main sub-regions and 319 villages that make up Champagne. Add to this vine-age, and the skill and stylistic choices of the winemaker, and you have infinite possibilities of what a Rosé Champagne can be. All that said, let's explore!



1. NV Brut Rosé “Élégance” – Francis Cossy \$45.50 CLUB PRICE \$38.50

- **60% Pinot Noir**
- **30% Pinot Meunier**
- **10% Chardonnay**
- **Dosage 3 g/l**
- **500 cases produced**
- **All fruit from the 2010 vintage**

This is a ***Rosé d’Assemblage*** – 20% red wine from Pinot Noir was added to the final blend.

Young Sophie Cossy and her mother Geneviève took over the estate when Sophie’s father passed away unexpectedly. Sophie has quickly shown a knack for crafting exquisite wines with a very feminine touch. The family estate dates to 1764, and they began bottling and selling under their own label in the 1950s. All the holdings (just 25 acres) lie in the adjoining tiny villages of Jouy-lès-Reims and Pargny-lès-Reims, just minutes outside of Reims, Champagne’s largest city.

A light hand is evident in this wine, with its beautiful salmon-verging-on-pink color, and the elegance and finesse on the palate. I find this to be a very elegant example of a ***Rosé d’Assemblage***, with some lovely savory notes coupled with the bright acidity that makes you want to come back for more. Fabulous with grilled salmon, or on its own.



In the vines with Sophie Cossy & friend

2. NV Brut Rosé – Pierre Brigandat \$42.50

CLUB PRICE \$35

- 100% Pinot Noir
- 100% from the 2010 vintage
- Dosage - 9g/l
- 600 cases produced

The very last vineyard in the Champagne appellation (or the very first vineyard in Champagne as you drive up from Burgundy, as the Brigandats like to say.) Located at the southern edge of the Aube, the southernmost region of Champagne, the Brigandat estate is in the village of Channes, a one-road hamlet of farm-houses with zero commercial establishments for miles around. This is as far out on the frontier as you can get.

Pierre Brigandat started planting the hillsides of Channes in 1965, while he continued working as a banker. He left the bank to focus fulltime on the vineyards and wines in 1985, and his son Bertrand now runs the estate, having taken over in 2003.

This is a *Rosé de Saignée*, and an extremely light-colored one, just the palest shade of pink. It smells and tastes like tiny wild strawberries, and is extremely lacy, delicate, and seemingly weightless. Well-balanced and endlessly yummy, I love it with sausages and prosciutto.



3. NV Brut Rosé “Cuvée Rubis” – Marc Chauvet \$44.50 CLUB PRICE \$37.50

- 33% Pinot Noir
- 33% Pinot Meunier
- 33% Chardonnay
- Final blend includes 20% Red Wine of Pinot Noir
- Dosage - 6g/l
- 500 cases produced

The Chauvets have been growing grapes and making wine in Champagne since 1529. Winemaker Clotilde Chauvet experimented with several different styles of Rosé before settling on this lovely **Rosé d'Assemblage**. She uses the same base wine as for her NV Brut, and then adds in 20% red Pinot Noir from her estate parcels in Rilly-la-Montagne to arrive at the final blend.

I love this wine for its crisp edge and great depth of flavor. It has power and intensity hidden underneath, and is a great partner for veal chops or rabbit loin or a great charcuterie plate.



4. NV Brut Rosé “**Désir**” – Vincent Couche \$52

CLUB PRICE \$44

- 80% Pinot Noir from Buxeuil
- 20% Chardonnay from Montgeux
- Vinification in tank and barrel (about one-third in barrel)
- Dosage 9g/l
- 650 cases produced

The first, and still only, estate in Champagne to produce a Biodynamically certified Champagne (**Cuvée Chloé** – featured in this club two shipments ago) – young Vincent Couche is on Champagne’s cutting edge. His viticulture is meticulous, and the results of his painstaking approach are evident in the glass.

All of his Pinot Noir is on the limestone soils of Buxeuil, a tiny outpost in the Aube, way down in the southern reaches of Champagne. His Chardonnay is from the stellar terroir of Montgeux – about an hour north from his winery and just outside of the medieval city of Troyes.

This is a Rosé de Saignée, with the Pinot skins left to macerate with the juice overnight. There is a robust, intense minerality to this wine. It has good heft on the palate while remaining ethereal at the same time. This is one of my go-to wines with sushi, and it’s killer with strong cheeses too – try it with some ripe Époisses!



In the cellar with Vincent Couche in Buxeuil

5. NV Brut Rosé “l’Argillier” – Jérôme Coessens \$77.50 CLUB PRICE \$66

- 100% Pinot Noir
- 100% from the single vineyard “l’Argillier”
- Dosage 6 g/l
- 250 cases produced

Jérôme Coessens has emerged as one of the brightest stars in the Aube, where a group of young vigneron are turning Champagne on its head. (Jérôme was in viticulture and enology school at the same time as Pierre Brigandat and Vincent Couche – quite a good class, I would say !)

All of his wines come from the single 5-acre parcel named *l’Argillier* in the tiny village of Ville-sur-Arce. « Argile » is the French word for clay. The vineyard sits on a bed of Kimmeridgian limestone (the same mother-rock found in Chablis), but also has a uniquely high concentration of clay in the soil, much more than is typical for the region. The clay gives the wines muscle and power.

One sip and you’ll know this is not a rosé for the faint of heart. The Pinot was left to macerate with the skins for 12 hours, imbuing the juice with deep color, powerful flavors, and more backbone than you might be expecting. Drink this beauty with grilled salmon, a stuffed roast chicken, or a nice piece of Chaource, the great local cheese made just down the road from Coessens.



Jérôme Coessens and wife Valerie in their l’Argillier vineyard

6. NV Brut Rosé “Les Beaudiers” – Laherte Frères \$85 CLUB PRICE \$72

- **100% Pinot Meunier**
- **100% Barrel Fermented, Malolactic Blocked**
- **Dosage - 3g/l**
- **350 cases produced**

With 75 different vineyard parcels totaling 27 acres in 10 different villages, Thierry Laherte and his son Aurélien produce one of the most amazingly diverse ranges of Champagne in existence. They make 12 different Champagnes in all, each different from the next, and all of them stunning.

My favorite of all of the Laherte wines may be this **Rosé de Saignée** called *Les Beaudiers*. It's outside the norm on a lot of fronts – very few Champagnes are 100% Pinot Meunier, even fewer Rosés are 100% Meunier, very little Champagne is barrel fermented, and very few Champagnes that block the malolactic fermentation have a dosage as low as 3 grams. By going places where conventional wisdom says one can't go – the Lahertes have found greatness.

Les Beaudiers is a single vineyard wine from the Laherte home village of Chavot (the vineyard is actually called Les Baudiers, but a clerical error occurred in the printing of the labels and they just decided to go with it.) Originally planted in 1953, it is farmed Biodynamically – another practice they say you can't do in Champagne.

It may break all the “rules”, yet this wine sets the standard for great Rosé Champagne in my book. How they achieve a wine with such power and refinement in the same package is mind-blowing. I find this wine to be in a class of its own. Rich, savory, intense, minerally – there's truly nothing else quite like it. As delicious as it is on its own, pair it with a grilled veal chop or roast chicken with truffles or mushrooms. You may never be the same again.

Next shipment in the Spring...

Thanks for joining us on our exploration of the great wines of Champagne! Watch your email for information on our next Caveau Champagne Club shipment coming in the spring, and for pre-arrival offerings on all the yummy Bubbles headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website: www.caveauselections.com