



Champagne Club

FALL 2020

Terroir

Vallée de la Marne.
Chavot.
Dominant of clay soils.



Dosage

2,5 g/l

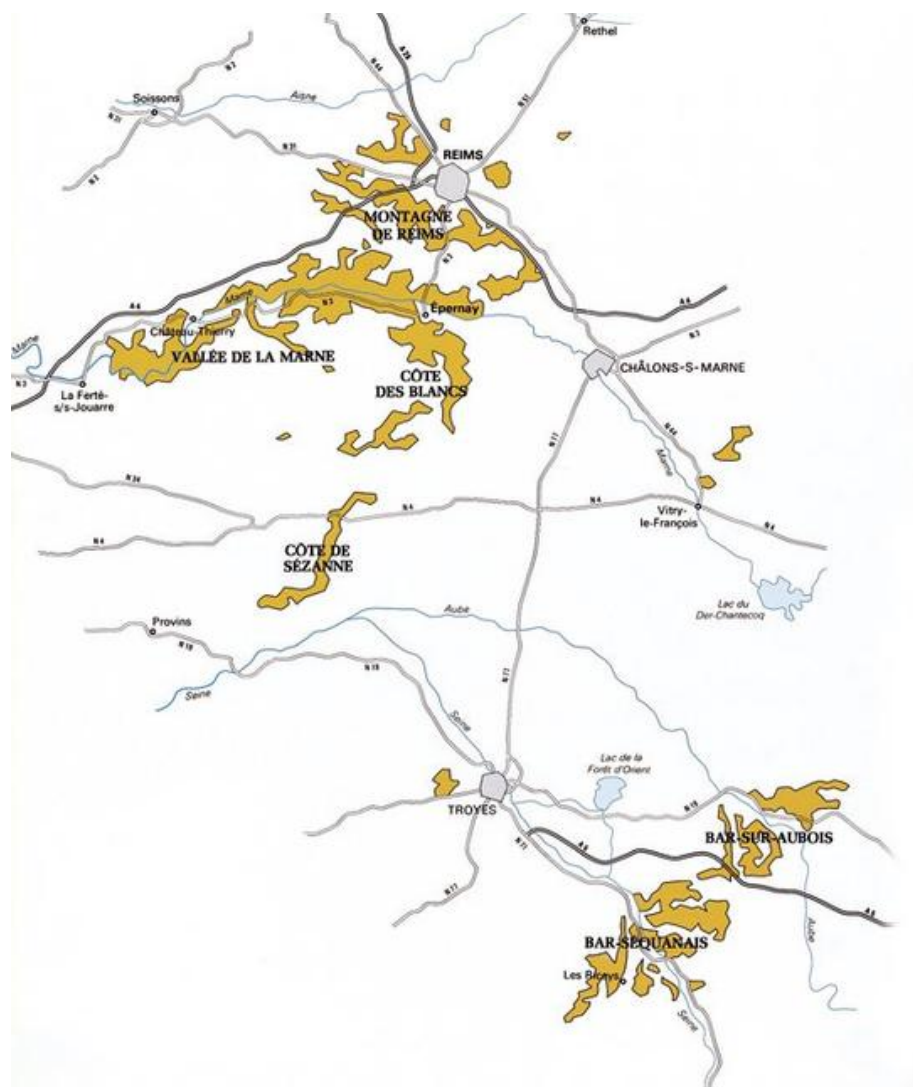
Welcome to the latest edition of the **Caveau Champagne Club** – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of some of the most fascinating sparkling wines on earth – Grower Champagnes.

This club functions just like our **Burgundy Club** (and if you're not already a member, you can sign-up on the website). Also, check-out our new **"House Wine" Clubs** if you're interested in a regular supply of yummy Burgundy at around \$20-\$25 per bottle!

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 one by one.

This shipment is a detailed study of **Rosé Champagne** – the sublime bubbly 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...





Yes, Champagne is a wine of place.

For over 200 years we were fed the notion that Champagne was a wine of blending and winemaking, and that the provenance of the grapes mattered little. That's really amazing, if you think about - as there is clear evidence that as far back as the late 1600s they knew with great certainty that wines made from different villages in the Champagne region were significantly different, and that some were clearly better than others.

The Grower Champagne revolution of the last 25 years - and yes, it has indeed been a revolution - has brought to the forefront the undeniable fact that Champagne is, at its best, a wine of terroir. The specific characteristics of the place where the grapes were grown is of the ultimate importance. A great wine still requires great winemaking and great viticulture, but the quality of the raw material, and the intrinsic qualities of the fruit derived from its place of origin are the very core of what the resulting wine is all about.

The increased availability of hand-crafted, place-specific and personality-driven wines - at prices that are a fraction of the mass-produced "Luxury Brands", is the other great thing that was brought about by the Grower revolution. We are fortunate to be living in the Golden Age of Champagne - the wines have never been better, the selection never wider, the prices never more accessible. Yay!

If you're new to the Club, or would like to brush up on how Champagne is made and what all those words on the labels mean, you'll find our **Champagne 101 tutorial** on our website under "Champagne Club".

We import exclusively, and this club features, **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, and produced in huge factories.

The big names that you are likely familiar with – Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Mumm, Taittinger, 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 over 7,500 of these small grower-producers in Champagne, but fewer than 300 of them are available here in the U.S.



Grower Vs Negociant Champagne

Yes, I am passionately pro Grower Champagne - but only the good ones. Not all “Farmer Fizz” is good - the vast majority of it just isn’t. In fact the worst quality Champagne you’re likely to ever encounter is probably a lower-echelon Grower bottling - some of which are downright awful. Conversely, not all Negociant Champagne is bad - some of it is flat-out marvelous. **Krug, Salon, Bollinger, Roederer, Jacquesson** and many others are negocies who produce some of the finest wines on the planet. Clicquot, Moët, and many of the other “big names”, however, do not.

As production volume increases it just gets so much harder to maintain a level of quality. Equally as important - a larger production volume makes it more difficult to produce wines with personality or character, and nearly impossible to make a wine that speaks of a sense of place (especially when the grapes are coming from several hundred different places!) That’s why I love and applaud the top larger producers who are making gloriously delicious wines. At the end of the day - great, average, and poor producers come in all sizes. We specialize in the great smaller producers, who we think are making some of the most exciting wines to be found anywhere.



Pink Champagne on Ice!

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.

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!



Champagne Cossy - Cuvée Éléance - \$40

Winemaker Sophie Cossy's vineyards are all in the adjoining villages of Jouy-lès-Reims, Pargny-lès-Reims and Ville-Dommange in the heart of the "Petite Montagne" section of the Montagne de Reims. "Petite" does not infer that it is lesser, it is simply a reference to a generally lower elevation than the "Grand Montagne" section to the east and south. Just 10 minutes west of the city, it's a sea of vines as far as you can see in every direction, and all three major Champagne grapes are grown here. 50% of the acreage on the Petite Montagne is planted to Pinot Meunier, 35% is Pinot Noir, with only 15% devoted to Chardonnay. The soils have a lot of sand mixed in with clay over the chalk bedrock, with the resulting wines tending to be dense and more structured as a general rule.

This hillside happens to be one of the best areas for Pinot Meunier - which otherwise is mostly planted in the Vallée de la Marne. The hallmarks of Meunier are floral and herbal aromas, and a delicate, creamy texture on the palate - all of which lend themselves nicely to a delicate, elegant Brut Rosé .

Sophie's Rosé is a crowd-pleaser, and one of those rare Rosés that works well both as an apéritif and with food. On the nose it's redolent of wild strawberries, with an undercurrent of cherries and a hint of blueberries as well. Graceful and ethereal - it's a liquid version of a sunny spring day. This is a **Rosé d'Assemblage**, with 20% red wine from the Pinots in the final blend

- 60% Pinot Noir, 30 % Pinot Meunier, 10% Chardonnay, all from organically-farmed estate vineyards
- 75% from the 2015 harvest, with reserve wines from 2014 & 2013
- Over 3 years on the lees in bottle
- Disgorged in July, 2019 with a dosage of 8.5 grams per liter.



Champagne Marion-Bosser - Brut Rosé - \$44

(Pronounced Mah-ree-own Boh-sair) Winemaker **Élodie Marion** is the 5th generation Vigneronne at her family's tiny estate on the hillsides of Hautvillers, the village considered to be the cradle of Champagne (and the workplace of legendary winemaking monk Dom Perignon in the late 1600s.)

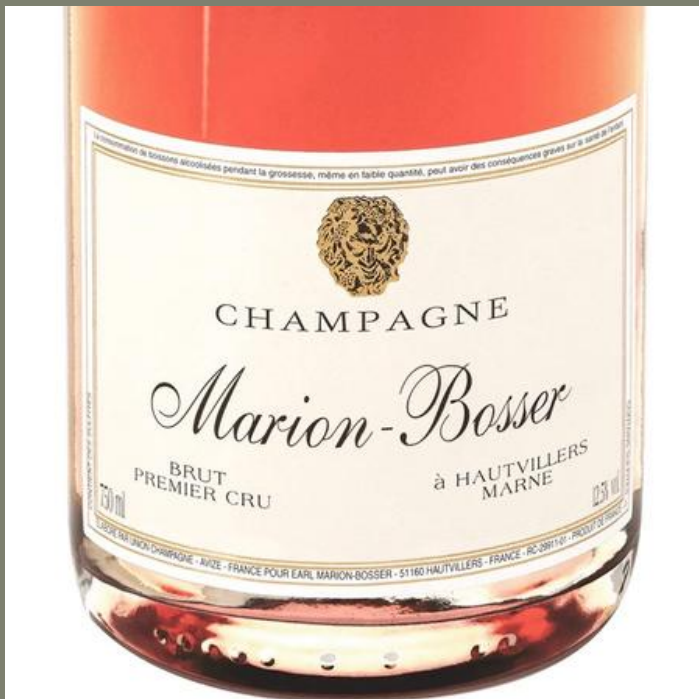
Élodie is not only the 5th generation, she's the 5th *woman* to run the estate - every winemaker throughout thier history has been female. The wines have always been focused on elegance and finesse.



Élodie studied her craft in Burgundy, working for Henri Boillot in Volnay and Jean-Marc Brocard in Chablis before returning to Hautvillers to take the reins of the estate. You may be familiar with her gorgeous wines from previous Club selections - but this is the first time we've been able to include her fabulous Rosé.

The Marion-Bosser Brut Rosé is another seductive example of a **Rosé d'Assemblage**. I love the pale salmon color, and the captivating raspberry, strawberry and red currant notes on the notes. It's a touch lighter-bodied than the Cossy, and I prefer this as an apéritif or with nutty, salty cheeses like Comté or Gruyère.

- 60% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir, and 15% Pinot Noir as red wine is the final blend.
- Based on the 2015 harvest, with 2014 reserve wines.
- Three years of extended lees contact
- Disgorged in June 2019, dosage 9 grams per liter





Laherte Frères - Brut Rosé "Ultradition" - \$44
"Rosé de Meunier" - \$44

Champagne **Laherte Frères** has been on a major roll since young Aurélien Laherte took full control of the operation some 9 years ago (though he'd been working side-by-side with his dad, Thierry, since 2002.) Aurélien is the 7th generation to run the family estate, one of the rare ones that started making and selling wine under their own label decades ago, before the Grower revolution began.

His dad embarked on some out-of-the-box thinking and non-traditional practices over 20 years ago, and Aurélien has taken them to fruition in his never ending quest for excellence, all in the name of making Champagnes that are first and foremost wines of place.

Laherte has vineyards in 10 different villages in Champagne, but is based in the hilltop village of **Chavot**, just a few minutes south of Epernay. It's in the heart of what is known as the **Coteaux Sud d'Epernay** - a small group of villages that are sandwiched between the Marne Valley to the North and the Côte des Blancs just to the south.

Aurélien has emerged as one of the major stars in the Grower Champagne world, and his wines are coveted across the globe. From time to time we've been able to convince him to give us a couple of great bottlings to include in our Club packages, and I'm happy to announce we have two of his beauties for you this time. (One of the best ways to learn about wine is to taste wines side-by-side, especially if they're from the same winemaker.)

These two will make a fascinating exercise, as they are made from **the same exact base wine** - the only difference between the two is the level of **Dosage** (the amount of sugar added just after disgorgement and before the cork goes in.)

These are rare examples of Rosé Chamapagnes that are actually a hybrid between a *Rosé d'Assemblage* and a *Rosé de Saignée*. These wines are assembled from three different component parts:

- Grapes fermented with no skin contact - i.e. a typical "white" Champagne
- Grapes fermented with 12 hours of skin contact to pick up some color (this portion on its own would be a *Rosé de Saignée*)
- Grapes fermented with total skin contact, to produce Red Wine.

Add these three together and you have Laherte's unique formula for fascinating Rosé.

Again, the only difference between these two is the level of *Dosage*.

For each wine:

- 100% old-vine Pinot Meunier from the Laherte Estate parcels in the village of Chavot
- 30% Rosé de Saignée
- 10% Red Wine
- 60% White Champagne
- 50% from 2016 harvest, 50% reserve wines from 2015
- Fermentation in a combination of Enameled tanks, large oak tanks, and small Burgundy barrels
- Dosage - "Ultradition" - 7 g/l
- Dosage - "Rosé de Meunier" - 2.5 g/l

Once again - these two are the exact same wine, with only a difference in Dosage. I highly recommend that you taste them side-by-side - blind if you want to - and see which one you prefer, or which one seems "sweeter" to you. More sugar does not necessarily translate to increased sweetness - it's a fascinating study!

Both of these are brimming with pretty berry fruits on the nose, along with hints of cranberry, orange peel and rose petal. These are very complex and extraordinarily beautiful wines. I personally have a slight preference for the Rosé de Meunier - the lower dosage gives it more of an "edge" on the palate, but I truly love them both. Check 'em out and enjoy!



Cécile & Vincent Bauchet



Champagne Pertois-Moriset - "Ros&Blanc" \$45

Winemaker Vincent Bauchet and his wife Cécile have exploded onto the scene with one of the hottest estates in Champagne's hallowed Côte des Blancs. In 2015 they took over from her parents, invested a massive amount of money in vineyard and winery improvements, and it has paid off with what are now some of the most sought after Blanc de Blancs Champagnes we've ever offered.

What a lot of folks don't know is that they also make a tiny amount of an outstanding Rosé - creatively named "Ros&Blanc". It is extremely rare for a Rosé to be based mostly on Chardonnay. The Pertois-Moriset vineyards are 100% all Grand Cru Chardonnay, so to make a Rosé and get a touch of color and new layers of flavor, they purchase some Grand Cru Pinot Noir from the village of Bouzy, the most prestigious and pedigreed Pinot in all of Champagne. Thus, you have a 100% **Grand Cru Rosé**, a rare beast indeed!



- 92% Chardonnay
- 8% Pinot Noir Red Wine from Bouzy
- Vinified in Stainless Steel Tank
- 36 months ageing on the lees in bottle
- Dosage 3 g/l

So here we have another *Rosé d'Assemblage*, but a very different one in that it's mostly Chardonnay. Not just Chardonnay, but Chardonnay from the intensely mineraly terroir of Mesnil-sur-Oger, Oger, Cramant and Chouilly. There is a precise and powerful liquid-limestone flavor and texture that could only come from this vaunted terroir, almost Chablis-like. Couple that with the rich, weighty, vinous Pinot from Bouzy and you've got a beautiful Rosé - and this one really rocks with food.



Champagne Coessens - "l'Argillier" Rosé - \$66

From one 5-acre vineyard on the slopes above the hamlet of Ville-sur-Arce, Coessens makes 8 different Champagnes in micro quantities - every single one of them spectacular in their own way. Jérôme and his wife Valérie and their vineyard are in the Aube, Champagne's southernmost reaches. He is one of the true characters in the region - larger than life and imbued with an engaging spirit, which shows through in each of his wines.

The Aube is a whole different universe from the rest of Champagne - it's a 2.5-hour drive from Reims and feels like many worlds apart. It's a massive area - over 19,000 acres of vines, 86% of which are Pinot Noir, with only 10% Chardonnay and the balance Pinot Meunier (with a tiny bit of Pinot Blanc still around as well, called "blanc vrai" in the local parlance.) The soils throughout the region are mostly Kimmeridgian limestone - the same soil found in Chablis - which is just a couple kilometers down the road, in fact.

It is this soil, along with the thick vein of clay that runs through the l'Argillier vineyard (*Argile* being the French word for Clay) - that gives these wines their intensity and power. Each of the Coessens bottlings are 100% Pinot Noir, and all from a single vintage.

We're wrapping up this tasting with this wine because it is the biggest and boldest example of a Rosé Champagne you'll ever run across. It's a true, traditional *Rosé de Saignée* - a portion of the grapes are treaded by foot, in the old style, and then the juice is left to macerate with the skins overnight to bleed the ruby-pink color. The result is a robust and powerful Rosé - imagine a Gevrey-Chambertin with bubbles! This one screams out for food, and is great with steak, veal, or roast chicken. Yum!

- 100% Pinot Noir from the l'Argillier Vineyard
- Minimum three years on the lees before disgorgement
- Dosage 9.5 g/l
- Only 250 cases produced



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 and Burgundies headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website: **www.CaveauSelections.com**

Launched in 2005, **Caveau Selections** is owned and operated by Martha & Scott Wright, winemakers in Oregon, Champagne and Burgundy since 1999. Scott has been drinking and studying the wines and regions of Burgundy and Champagne since the 1970s, and visiting regularly since the 1980s. He leads annual Insiders' Tours of both Burgundy and Champagne, and teaches seminars here and abroad. Email **scott@caveauselections.com** for more information.

