



WINE News

Champagne Dreams Are Made of These



OCTOBER 17, 2022 FEATURES

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Exhilarating Champagne for the Holidays

By Gary Westby



As the holidays draw near, we have you covered for your Champagne needs at K&L. On this page, you will find three of my inflation-busting favorites—all wines that have held the same low price for several years now thanks to our direct import relationships with the producers.

While it is true that prices have gone up in euros and transportation is slow and expensive, the favorable exchange rate is allowing us to still offer great deals on our direct buys.

We also have some of the most prestigious brands in these pages, featuring two of the highest quality Grande Marques in the world of Champagne: Michael Benoit explains the latest from Champagne Louis Roederer on page 2 and Scott Beckerley has the news from Laurent-Perrier on page 3. On the final page, Giovanni Bueno writes up possibly the greatest value of all with the fantastic and so well-priced Champagnes of Baron-Fuenté. Prices on Baron-Fuenté start as low as \$24.99 for a wine with three years on the lees and 40% reserves!

I conclude with staff favorite Franck Bonville, our all-Grand Cru great from the hallowed ground of Avize. Get your bottles of Bonville before our crew buys them all... Clyde already bought half the magnums!

Direct Import Champagne to Make Your Wallet and Palate Happy



Damien Hugot Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne \$34.99 Did someone say inflation buster? This incredible, all estate-grown, Grand Cru Chardonnay hails from Cramant and Chouilly where Damien and Miwa work tirelessly in the vineyards to make one of the most expressive, full-bodied Blanc de Blancs that we carry.

Current batch is based on 2018 with three years of on the lees, plus reserves from the Hugot Solera. Toasty up front but chalky on the back!



Egrot Brut Champagne \$34.99 We have been working with Elisabeth Goutorbe for more than 10 years now, and in that time many of you have visited her in Aÿ where most of their grapes are grown. She comes from Champagne royalty, and her own wines show off the class and breed that they should. Composed of mostly Aÿ grand

cru, this 66% Pinot Noir, 34% Chardonnay blend shows serious sourdough toast married to a fine bead and a refreshing back end.



Jean-Jacques Lamoureux "Réserve" Brut Champagne \$29.99 All estate-grown Champagne for under \$30! This 100% Pinot Noir hails from just 3 miles north of Burgundy in Les Riceys from soil almost identical to Chablis. The name "Réserve" is truth in advertising, as this wine benefits from a full 50% of older Champagne in the blend.

It has a great nose of fresh bread and carries through on the palate with savory Pinot Noir power and a dry, but not austere finish.

The Incredible Range of Champagne Louis Roederer

By Michael Benoit, Champagne Specialist

The illustrious Champagne Louis Roederer needs no introduction—their **Cristal** is one of the most sought-after Champagnes in the world. Louis Roederer's commitment to quality is evident in every bottle, as solidly confirmed at our recent staff Champagne summit, where Gary led us through a deep dive into the many Champagne producers we carry.

Founded in 1776, Louis Roederer has dedicated itself to the notion that great Champagne begins not in the cellar, but in the vineyard. They have lived up to that motto by meticulous care for their large holdings in Champagne—spanning more than 590 acres! Their commitment to converting all of their vineyards to organic and biodynamic agriculture promises that Louis Roederer's quality will remain among the very best in Champagne for generations to come.

Now let's explore these fantastic wines!

The Louis Roederer "Collection 242" Brut Champagne \$54.99



replaces the Louis Roederer Brut Premier, offering a tremendous upgrade. This exquisite edition is a blend of fruit sourced in equal parts from three different terroirs: the Vallée de la Marne, Montagne de Reims, and Côte des Blancs. It is artfully composed of all three major Champagne grape varieties: 42% Chardonnay, 36% Pinot Noir, and 22% Meunier. Collection 242 is largely based on the 2017 vintage, but the real magic comes from the 34% of the wine aged in a perpetual reserve—a blend

of wines dating back to 2012. This Champagne has so much to offer, with electric acidity, crisp ripe apple flavors, and just enough delicate brioche toast. A profusion of orchard fruit flavors unfolds in the glass with a hint of baking spice, a solid undercurrent of chalk, and a wonderfully energetic yet fine mousse. This is a crowd-pleasing bottle to be sure, but it has plenty of complexity to enchant even the most experienced Champagne drinker. I'd confidently bring Collection 242 anywhere I'm invited this holiday season.



As with all their vintage offerings, the **2014 Louis Roederer Brut Champagne \$79.99** comes entirely from the estate's own vineyards. A blend of 71% Pinot Noir and 29% Chardonnay from Verzy and Chouilly, this delectable Champagne from the cool vintage of 2014 shows an amazing pastry crust nose, with hints of apple skin and praline. On the palate the 25% oak fermentation and 20% malolactic fermentation really show through, imbuing the wine with a luxuriously creamy texture and a finish that goes on and on. Evolving in the glass, the freshness of red apple gives way to brown butter notes and a delicate yellow peach character that transforms to shades of fresh, underripe raspberry. This has the richness that I crave in Champagnes during the cooler months, without sacrificing the

freshness and snap that makes it a perfect apéritif.

For a festive bottle of Champagne to suit the holiday table, pick up the **2015 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Champagne \$79.99**. This rosé from the south-facing slopes of Cumières and Chouilly blends 62% Pinot Noir and 38% Chardonnay to deliver juicy fruit flavors in balance with a savory umami character. The perfumed nose is redolent with ripe yellow peach and strawberries. The palate, which has a rounder feel due to the 11% fermentation in oak as well as the 30% that undergoes malolactic fermentation, balances plenty of lovely raspberry flavors with a tart strawberry note. The texture is fine and velvety, and the long, savory finish has a striking core of minerality. This is a true food-pairing Champagne, with the depth and intensity to pair well with richer foods, and the umami character to enhance a cornucopia of holiday favorites. To put it simply: pair this with Thanksgiving dinner and it will complement the entire meal!



The 2014 Louis Roederer "Cristal" Brut Champagne

\$349.99 absolutely blew me away, from its expressive nose of ripe lemon and mandarin orange, to its amazingly creamy texture and nearly endless finish full of oyster shell minerality. Composed of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, this vintage of Cristal combines 39 different plots across the villages of Verzenay, Verzy, Beaumont-sur-Vesle, Aÿ, Avize, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, and Cramant. As expected, a sharp line of acidity provides wonderful freshness to this Champagne, but the core of golden apple, nectarine, and Meyer lemon is unexpectedly rich, especially when carried along by the creamy quality it has, reminiscent of the freshest mozzarella. There's a real presence of chalk on the mid-palate, along with beautiful notes of sourdough toast.



Whether celebrating with family at your holiday table or ringing in the



Gary with Jean-Baptiste Lecaillon, the chef de cave of Roederer and the chief of winemaking operations for Maisons Marquies et Domaines.

new year with your special someone, Champagne Louis Roederer has the perfect bottle for any occasion. You can always count on Roederer to deliver stunning wine. With this variety of price points, I hope you pop at least one of them this holiday season—and on into the new year!

The Elegance of Champagne Laurent-Perrier

By Scott Beckerley, *Champagne Specialist*



My favorite day, among the many I have spent in Champagne, was at Laurent-Perrier. Coincidentally, it was one of the only days that we were not soaked with rain!

From the vineyards to the cellar and, of course, to the wines, everything at Laurent-Perrier is the pinnacle of sophistication and elegance. At the very top of this pinnacle is the Grand Siècle program of Laurent-Perrier, which dates to 1959. I was able to see a portion of the cellar (there are 7 miles of cellar in total!), which contains this original release, and it was a highlight of the tour.



The current **Laurent-Perrier “Grand Siècle” Iteration #25 Brut Champagne \$224.99 99JS 97WA 96VN 95DC 95WS** is a blend of 55% Chardonnay and 45% Pinot Noir. I was extremely lucky to taste this beauty about two weeks ago. All of the fruit is Grand Cru. The Chardonnay comes from the classic villages of Avize, Cramant, Oger, and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. The Pinot

Noir comes from the famous villages of Ambonnay and Bouzy, as well as Verzy, Tours-sur-Marne, and Maily. The vintages in this blend are 2008 (65%), 2007 (25%), and 2006 (10%). Cellar aging was 12 years on the lees at the time of disgorgement. Dosage is lower at 7 grams per liter. This wine shows such a pretty nose of toasted almonds, cream, light baking spices, and buttery pastry. All of these aromas unfolded after initial scents of oranges and lemon zest! Citrus fruit and saline greet the palate, followed by toastiness, nectarine, and white peach fruit. Extremely refreshing with an exceptionally long finish—elegance and finesse in a glass.

For a fun comparison, I also opened a 750ml bottle of **Laurent Perrier “Grand Siècle” Iteration #23 Champagne**, which had been given to me some years ago. It has a touch (58%) more Chardonnay and is a blend of the 2006 (65%), 2004 (20%), and 2002 (15%) vintages. It is currently only available in the **magnum** size **\$529.99**. What a contrast it was! A lush nose of caramel and golden



Lucie Peryere, one of the winemakers and owners of Laurent-Perrier, at the tasting room in Tours-sur-Marne

apples. Like the Iteration 25, the Laurent-Perrier signature of citrus and toasted nuts also shines through with this one. On the palate, nectarine, brown butter, whipping cream and the telltale saline. Wow! Such a fun way to spend an afternoon. Stay tuned for older iterations to be released later this year.

We followed this with the always outstanding **Laurent-Perrier “Cuvée Rosé” Brut Rosé Champagne \$84.99** (also available in **magnum \$199.99**). This is a 100% Pinot

Noir beauty that spends a minimum of five years on the lees. (Magnums spend an additional year on the lees.) Laurent-Perrier was one of the first Champagne houses to introduce nonvintage Brut Rosé in 1968. The nose has rose petals and deep cherry scents, with a nice hint of ripe strawberry and orange marmalade. In the mouth, dark cherry fruit dominates, followed by more ripe, juicy strawberries and, finally, bright minerals. This is why this Brut Rosé is a best-seller for us!



The flagship **Laurent-Perrier “La Cuvée” Brut Champagne (\$29.99 375ml, \$54.99 750ml, \$110.99 1.5L)** is all stone-fruited, pear, and caramel goodness.

The **Laurent-Perrier Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature Champagne \$84.99** shows lemon curd, nectarine, mineral and key lime flavors. As always, it is excellent!



The newly released **2012 Laurent-Perrier Brut Champagne \$79.99** is alive with notes of pine nuts, plush citrus, tart apple, apricot, plus spice and minerals at the top of the palate—it’s a grand release.



If you like things a little sweeter the **Laurent Perrier “Harmony” Demi-Sec Champagne (375ml) \$29.99** delivers marzipan, vanilla, and pastry flavors. Surprisingly spicy and not overly sweet. I am not a Demi-Sec fan but, this one is incredibly special and delicious. I will save my “pet” wine for the last.

The magnificent **2004 Laurent-Perrier “Cuvée Alexandra” Brut Rosé Champagne \$299.00 96VN 95JS 95WA 95WE**. Over the years, this beauty has evolved into peach preserve and orange marmalade goodness with background flavors of bright cherry, saline, mineral, and baking spices. You would be hard-pressed to find many Brut Rosés better than this!



Laurent-Perrier has long been a standard bearer for exceptional Champagne, with a history dating back to 1881. They practice sustainable winegrowing and requires the same from all of the growers and vineyards whence they source their fruit. Each and every one of their grapes come from High-Environmental-Value (HVE) vineyards, which promote biodiversity and sustainable agricultural systems in addition to eschewing pesticides. Additionally, Laurent-Perrier Champagnes are always vegan, so everyone can enjoy!

Happy sipping!

Scintillating Champagne from Franck Bonville

By Gary Westby, Champagne Buyer

One of my first stops in Champagne early this year was to Bonville, where I had the unusual pleasure of getting to meet with three generations of the family. Olivier Bonville, whom so many of you know from past events and visits to the region, his father Gilles Bonville, and finally Olivier's son-in-law, Ferdinand Ruelle, who is taking over the reins from Olivier.

This entirely Grand Cru property is endowed with some of the best and most valuable vineyards in all of Champagne, with the villages of Avize, Oger, and Mesnil all represented. If you love wines that are clean and dry, but still complex and age-worthy, you will be impressed with their line from top to bottom.

No grower I know puts more effort into their BSA (*brut sans année*) or as we would say, regular Brut. Back in 2011, this was the only wine that they made, declassifying all of their single-vineyard and vintage plots into it to ensure its quality. They call it **Franck Bonville Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne \$34.99**, and it is all Chardonnay sourced from a combination of mostly Avize with some Oger. The freshly baked

bread and racy white fruit of the nose give way to a mouthfeel of exquisite texture and tiny bubbles. I find the bead outstanding in this Champagne, and I think a lot of the reason is thanks to the full 50% of old reserves used in the blend. It finishes clean, racy, long, and chalky, and I can never tire of it.

We also received tiny allocations of the **2014 Franck Bonville Millésime Brut Blanc de Blancs \$44.99**, the **2013 Franck Bonville “Belles Voyes” Blanc de Blancs \$69.99**, and the “Pur” series: **2014 Franck Bonville “Pur Mesnil” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Avize**; **2014 Franck Bonville “Pur Oger” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne**; and **2014 Franck Bonville “Pur Mesnil” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne—all \$64.99**.

These are wines for Chardonnay lovers, for sure, but will entice anyone looking for a bright, expressive bubbly. Don't miss them!



Baron-Fuenté Incredible Value

By Giovanni Bueno, Champagne Specialist



No one delivers a head-snapping quality-to-price-ratio like Baron-Fuenté. With prices like these, you'll discover that Champagne is appropriate for any occasion—be it Tuesday night with friends or a celebration. Budget-friendly pleasures are just a cork pop away!

Baron-Fuenté Grande Réserve Brut Champagne \$24.99 is the perfect starting point to explore this wonderful family house. Fresh with orchard fruit notes, succulent stone fruit, and a beautiful balance of toast and fresh bread dough from three years *sur lie*, this wine celebrates the Meunier grape and rewards even the most casual sipper of Champagne. Also available in a **magnum** for **\$49.99**—you'll never find such a great deal on a large format!

Baron-Fuenté “Esprit” Brut Champagne \$34.99 and **Baron-Fuenté “Esprit” Brut Nature Champagne \$34.99** are where things take

an extra exciting turn. The Brut spends 5 years *sur lie*, and explodes with expressive floral, citrus, and red fruit notes. Using a traditional cepage (one-third each Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Meunier), the Esprit Brut has the gusto to sparkle during a great aperitif hour and shine all the way to dinner. The Esprit Brut Nature cranks up the Chardonnay to the tune of 55%, with 25% Meunier, and 20% Pinot Noir—all delighting in an extra year of lees aging. Together, they compose a clean, mineral-driven concerto with a nose of pretty white flowers, crisp Granny Smith apple, and freshly peeled lemon zest. This wine pairs perfectly with seafood prepared simply. The bubbles on this wine are soft and pretty like angel's wings, and the finish lingers long, like a good dream.

“From Sophie and Ignace to you,” the second generation of the Baron-Fuenté family inspires indulgence in the splendor of Champagne at a cost that could almost be friends and family pricing.



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