



## France, Champagne: Another Small Selection of Fine Champagnes

March 4, 2016

Just in case you ran out of Champagne at the end of last year, this is just a short list of recommendable Champagnes that I have tasted in the last few months on different occasions. Here, you will find some less well-known names such as Maurice Grumier, Remy Massin or Tristan H, as well as recently disgorged cuvées from world famous houses such as Pol Roger (including the 2004 Sir Winston Churchill), Jacquesson (including the new Extra-Brut Cuvée No. 739 and spectacular single vineyard cuvées from the 2005 vintage) and Moët & Chandon (including the Grand Vintages 2006 and the 1999 Collection). Champagne lovers with a heart for Pinot Meunier will certainly know Jérôme Prévost, whose extraordinary and delicate mono-cru, monovarietal and mono vintage cuvées from La Closerie, which I tasted with him in Berlin, just three days after the terrible terror attacks in Paris on November 13. The tasting of dozens of France's very best wine producers was planned to be held in the Ambassade de France in Berlin, but had to be cancelled short-term due to security concerns. Thanks to the solidarity of the owners and the heroic effort of Berlin wine importer Sébastien Visentin, this great event was finally held in the Pauly Saal in Berlin on November 16. Not only did all of the vintners show up, but hundreds of guests as well. It turned out to be an unforgettable tasting in a very special setting. It was that day when I fell in love with the fantastic Champagnes of Jacques Lassaigue, whose cuvées are highly appreciated by the world's finest restaurants, even though Lassaigue is not well represented in the media. Jacques, who farms four hectares of partly very old vines Chardonnay in Montgueux, does not send his Champagnes around for tastings. You either have to show up in Montgueux or in Berlin. Try to find his wines! If you ever see the 2010 Coteaux Champenoise Haut Revers du Chutat, you should definitely order it. This is a full-bodied and complex, pretty tropical-flavored Chardonnay table wine from 42-year-old vines that is not produced every year. This list will certainly be extended soon.

*Stephan Reinhardt*



**2006 Jacques Lassaigne  
Millesime Blanc des Blancs Brut  
Nature**

The 2006 Millésime Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature from Montgueux's Le Cotet vineyard (64%) and 60-year-old vines in Les Paluets is a fascinating, absorbing Champagne. Golden in color, it offers a deep and rich yet unmasked, natural bouquet of yeasty-scented Chardonnay flavors quoting pineapples, buttercup, ripe honeydew melon, biscuits, turrón, white chocolate with pine nuts and dried apricots. Rich and full-bodied but pure and natural again on the palate, this is an intense, full-flavored and multi-layered Champagne with an alluringly salty finish. Each gram of more sugar would have reduced the purity, and by nature, the rich character of this Brut Nature that has power and complexity enough to mesmerize by its natural beauty.

I tasted the wine again in November 2015 and it offered a lovely iodine and chalky bouquet, a highly elegant and balanced palate with a complex minerality and structure, and an iodine/salty aftertaste. This is great Champagne and worth a try. The wine did not see any oak, although you might feel there must have been at least a kiss of oak -- none! The 2006 was disgorged in September 2013.

Importer(s):

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse  
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30  
695 199 20, www.wein...

- Stephan Reinhardt (March, 2016)

**2010 Jacques Lassaigne Coteaux  
Champenoise Haut Revers du  
Chutat**

The bottle of the 2010 Coteaux Champenoise Haut Revers du Chutat had been opened 90 minutes before I tasted it together with Emmanuel Lassaigne in Berlin. From 42-year-old Chardonnay vines and aged for 22 months in small barrels without any bâtonnage, it delivers exotic fruit aromas (passion fruit, pineapples) intertwined with chalky and mocha flavors on the clear, ripe and complex nose. Bottled with 12.4% natural alcohol (which is pretty much for the region), this is a full-bodied, round, complex and very elegant, well structured and dry Chardonnay with a complex and lingering salty finish. The acidity is very well integrated, although as Emmanuel reports, it has been extremely high for years and has just recently fully integrated. Due to ripening problems, the Haut Revers du Chutat is not produced every year. So take the chance to check this wine out.

Importer(s):

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse  
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30  
695 199 20, www.weine-visentin.de

Robert Houde Wines LLC, Chicago, IL,  
www.roberthoudewines.com

- Stephan Reinhardt (March, 2016)

**NV Jacques Lassaigne Les  
Vignes de Montgueux Blanc de  
Blancs Extra Brut**

This non-vintage Les Vignes de Montgueux Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut is based on the vintages 2011 (52%), 2012 and 2010. Fermented in stainless steel, aged for one year in 228-liter barrels (malolactic fermentation included) and disgorged in December 2014 with no dosage, it delivers a complex and spicy bouquet with lovely oaky flavors. Dry and very mineral on the palate, this is a full-bodied, fine and refreshing Champagne with a long and complex, very expressive finish. An excellent Champagne from the Côte de Bar that is not marketed as Brut Nature because Emmanuel Lassaigne would find this labeling "too popular."

Importer(s):

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse  
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30  
695 199 20, www.weine-visentin.de

Robert Houde Wines LLC, Chicago, IL,  
www.roberthoudewines.com

- Stephan Reinhardt (March, 2016)

**NV Jacques Lassaigue Cuvee Le  
Cotet**

The non-vintage Cuvee Le Côtet Extra Brut is a 100% single vineyard Chardonnay from 50-year-old vines on very poor chalk soil. Fermented in 80% stainless steel and 20% 228-liter barrels, this cuvée is based 90% on the 2010 harvest, whereas the other 10% consist of the vintages 2007, 2005 and 2002. The wine shows a beautifully pure, complex, iodine and chalky bouquet mingled with ripe apple and citrus aromas. Full-flavored and full-bodied on the palate, this is a pure and lingeringly salty, very mineral and well structured Champagne of great purity and expression. It's very long and bone dry, of great finesse and elegance. This stringent and grippy Cotet is still very young but shall develop well over the next ten years easily, probably even 15 years.

Importer(s):

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse  
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30  
695 199 20, [www.weine-visentin.de](http://www.weine-visentin.de)

Robert Houde Wines LLC, Chicago, IL,  
[www.roberthoudewines.com](http://www.roberthoudewines.com)

- Stephan Reinhardt (March, 2016)

**NV Jacques Lassaigue La Colline  
Inspiree Extra Brut**

The NV La Colline Inspirée Extra Brut is a 100% Chardonnay based on the vintages 2011 (65%, eight months in barrels on the full lees), 2010 (20 months in barrels on full lees) and 2009 (32 months on full lees) that were blended only one day before the bottling without any addition of sulfur. The wine was disgorged without dosage in November 2014 and offers a clear and fresh, very pure and mineral bouquet with lemon flavors. There seems to be a sea breeze in this Champagne that brings the flavors of oysters and lemons onto the nose. Full-bodied and very complex on the palate, this is a serious and vinous, firmly structured Champagne of great elegance and expression. Its acidity is very well integrated into the mineral body and the "inspired hill" is still closed but has a great future ahead.

Importer(s):

Vin sur Vin Diffusion, Kopenicker Strasse  
18-20, D-10997 Berlin, Germany, +49 30  
695 199 20, [www.weine-visentin.de](http://www.weine-visentin.de)

Robert Houde Wines LLC, Chicago, IL,  
[www.roberthoudewines.com](http://www.roberthoudewines.com)

- Stephan Reinhardt (March, 2016)