

## WORKSHEET FOUR

## Explosive Matter

- Grand Vin de Champagne Jacquesson Non-Vintage Cuvée Brut from the 700 series
- Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut
- Veuve Clicquot Vintage
- Cuvée Dom Pérignon Vintage
- Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame Brut Vintage

You will be tasting non-vintage wines, followed by a vintage champagne, followed by two prestige selections – the sensation on the palate should range from lighter to a more full-bodied style. A single drinker (or smaller group) merely selects the number of champagnes appropriate to the number of people – by choosing something that intrigues, and enjoying the glimpse of history evoked in the glass.



Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bottles

To acclaim the invention of the *muselet*, the little wire cage which holds the cork in place, inspect the muselet and its cap from the bottle selected from the inventor's champagne House:

**Grand Vin de Champagne Jacquesson Non-Vintage Cuvée** from the 700 series  
39–54% Chardonnay, 20–36% Pinot Noir, 17–30% Meunier, 21–41% reserve wines  
This champagne from Jacquesson has been chosen in Adolphe Jacquesson's honour, even though the firm has since passed from the hands of the Jacquesson family. The numbering of the *cuvée* reflects the House's history: number 733, for example, is the *cuvée* blended in 2005, the 733<sup>rd</sup> made by Jacquesson since its inception. The label on the back of the bottle describes the exact blend, the number of bottles produced, the

month of disgorgement (that is, the removal of the plug of yeast after *remuage*) and the amount of sugar added per litre.

Compare the muselet cap of the Jacquesson Champagne to the caps on other bottles. All caps are different. To some, they are valuable items worthy of collection. You can see some handsome collections at:

<http://www.capsulabulles.net/>

<http://www.champagnecaps.net/>

<http://cadot.free.fr/plaquomusophilie/indexmus.html>

<http://www.aupalaisducollectionneur.com/>

<http://capsules.musa.free.fr/>



### **Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut**

25–30% Chardonnay, 30–45% Pinot Noir, 30–45% Meunier

Although the brand is now owned by Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH), celebrate the Moët family's energy and success by tasting the Non-Vintage Brut Imperial Champagne, the most popular champagne in the world. At the same time contemplate the logistical challenge of blending it in such huge quantities: it requires 140 parcels of grapes from different vineyards.

Moët & Chandon aims for consistency with its non-vintage product, regardless of what year it is produced or when it is bottled. You will find its champagne lively and generous with a bright fruitiness, at the same time supple and fresh, elegant and spicy, with some warm bready characters. Elegant and mature, its nuances reflect the diversity of its origins.

The Moët & Chandon website has tasting notes: <http://www.moet.com/>

### **Veuve Clicquot Vintage**

The next champagne celebrates one of the most famous women in the history of Champagne. Born Barbe Nicole Ponsardin in 1777, she married François Clicquot in 1798. When he died, in 1806, she was able to carry on the business. She and her cellar master invented the riddling table, which gave her company a huge competitive advantage as it was able to produce clear champagnes. The business enjoyed great success and the Widow Clicquot promoted her champagne widely within Europe, then later to the Russian market.

This champagne is always very good value. The blend's proportions depend on which grape varieties are the year's best, but an approximate blend is 33% Chardonnay, 60% Pinot Noir, 7% Meunier, blended from wines of 17 of the best Champagne villages. This complex wine may be cellared for up to 15 years. Veuve Clicquot vintage champagnes are only made in years when the quality of the grapes is worthy of being deemed 'vintage'. Whichever vintage you buy, be sure to consult the Clicquot website for current tasting notes: <http://www.veuve-clicquot.com>

You may need to email a request for the notes for an older vintage, but the response will be quick and efficient.

Try the next two champagnes side by side, to more fully enjoy the differences between them. Smell their aromas first!

### **Cuvée Dom Pérignon Vintage**

The champagne selected for celebrating the achievements of Dom Pérignon is always a prestige vintage wine, made only from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Its exact blend of grapes is today never disclosed.<sup>i</sup> Moët & Chandon made the first wine used for Dom Pérignon in 1921 although it was not released until 1936, six years after Moët & Chandon had acquired the rights to the Dom Pérignon name from another House, Champagne Mercier.<sup>ii</sup>

In fact, at that time and until 1944, Champagne Dom Pérignon was just a standard Moët & Chandon vintage champagne transferred to a replica eighteenth-century bottle with a facsimile label.<sup>iii</sup> Today its grapes are specially selected and the wine is treated very differently from vintage Moët & Chandon. Dom Pérignon is created only in years when the harvest has produced sufficient perfect grapes from selected parcels. It is aged on its lees for seven years and further ageing occurs in the bottle. A serious wine, Cuvée Dom Pérignon Vintage champagne can be served like a prestige white wine, in a glass which controls and displays the bouquet, at a temperature of 10–12°C (50–54°F), as recommended by the Dom Pérignon website, where tasting notes are to be found: <http://www.domperignon.com/#/en/>

Select ‘VINTAGE’ from the menu on the home page, and then select your vintage from its list. Dom’s cellar master, Richard Geoffroy, has described the Dom Pérignon style as ‘tense, rhythmic, vibrant, vigorous, precise, tactile, seamless, fresh yet mature, intense, complex, sensual’.<sup>iv</sup>



Vines, nourished on the blood of thousands of American, French and German young men, who fought and died during the Second Battle of the Marne, 1918, are ranged below the impressive monument to the dead Americans and French at Château-Thierry.

## **Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame Brut Vintage**

36% Chardonnay, 64% Pinot Noir

In 1972, to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the company – and celebrate the great widow – the first prestige La Grande Dame was released. It was from the 1962 vintage. The company describes the wine as: ‘Ethereal, free and original, the Grand Dame teases aficionados with its rarity, making an appearance only when nature offers a concordance of perfect conditions. This work of art has given command performances for the most demanding connoisseurs in the form of exceptional Brut vintages in 1995, 1996 and 1998, and Rosé vintages in 1995 and 1998.’<sup>v</sup>

The Champenois are an amazingly resilient and resourceful people. After hundreds of years of survival, hard work and constant striving for improvement, they still continue to research and search for excellence. Find their magic in your glass.

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<sup>i</sup> It was once disclosed on-line, but the post has been removed. In 1990 the Rosé was exactly half Chardonnay and half Pinot Noir. In 1982 it contained 60% Chardonnay and in 1969 60% Pinot Noir. Only once was 60% of any one grape variety exceeded, with 65% Chardonnay in 1970.

<sup>ii</sup> Faith, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>iii</sup> Juhlin, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

<sup>iv</sup> See [www.richardgeoffroy-domperignon.com/category/manifesto/?theme=10](http://www.richardgeoffroy-domperignon.com/category/manifesto/?theme=10)

<sup>v</sup> See [www.veuve-clicquot.com/en/selection/la-grande-dame](http://www.veuve-clicquot.com/en/selection/la-grande-dame)