



**POLANER**  
SELECTIONS  
OPEN YOUR MIND & TASTE

# CHAMPAGNE PRIMER

September 2012



LARMANDIER-BERNIER

## **The development of the Champagne market in the US**

### **Once upon a time...**

- Grand Marques set the standard!
- Each house has its signature style, produced consistently by blending vintages and “house” dosage (liqueur d’expédition)
- Champagne was the ultimate beverage for special occasions

### **Recent past (last 10-20 years to today):**

- Rise of the grower Champagne!
- “Big is bad, small is good” movement
- Popularized (largely and successfully) by the importer Terry Theise
- Idea that growers offer the true taste of each village vs. larger volume blended products
- Sommeliers/progressive retailers embrace the grower movement as “cool and hip”
- Champagne positioned as mostly for special occasions (though a bit more widespread)

### **What’s Next?**

- Shake-out of the Grower segment due to over proliferation and mixed quality
- Buyers buy by producer, rather than by importer or category type (Gr Marque/Grower)
- Rise of more “Vinous” Champagne category by some renegade producers who wanted to alter the Champagne “metaphor” into a new experience
- Italy (not France!) is the hotbed for the new movement (Denmark too)
- Champagne more as a wine alternative (we hope!)
- Use of bigger bowl stemware and even decanters! Flutes only for that old, *fuddy-duddy* stuff!

## **The Polaner Portfolio at a glance**

### **“Grower” Champagnes:**

- Own their own vineyards
- Emphasis on specific *terroirs* of their village or surrounding villages
- Examples:
  - Gatinois (Ay)
  - Pierre Moncuit (Le Mesnil-sur-Oger)
- Grower Champagnes with a “natural” approach:
  - Larmandier-Bernier (Avize) – Biodynamic
  - Agrapart (Avize) – Practicing Organic
  - Coutier (Ambonnay) – Practicing Organic

## One medium-sized Negociant-Manipulant (NM):

- Combines estate grapes with purchased fruit from same general area
- Example:
  - Moutard (Buxeuil)
- Significantly smaller than Grande Marques

## Champagne “Renegades”:

- Emphasis of Champagne as “wine”
- More vinous-style, less emphasis on bubbles, more about the Wine underneath
- Extreme dedication to vineyard work, very low yields for max expression of *terroir*
- In general, de-emphasizing traditional champagne philosophy of blending and homogenization (Vintages/grapes/vineyards) for more site specificity
- Low or no dosage to cover up the underlying *terroir*
- Examples:
  - Jacques Selosse (Avize)
  - Jerome Prévost (Gueux)
  - Cedric Bouchard (Celles-sur-Ource)
  - Marie-Courtin (Polisot)
  - Larmandier-Bernier (Vertus)
  - Agrapart (Avize)

## A quick primer on Champagne production...

1. Primary fermentation (alcoholic and malolactic, if done)
2. Blending and bottling of still wine(s)
3. Secondary fermentation in bottle (addition of yeast and sugar) to create CO<sub>2</sub>
4. Aging
5. Riddling (*rémuage*)
6. Disgorgement (*dégorgement*) & addition of dosage (*liqueur d'expédition*)

## Dosage levels:

- *Brut Nature* or *Brut Zéro* (less than 3 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Extra Brut* (less than 6 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Brut* (less than 15 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Extra Sec* or *Extra Dry* (12 to 20 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Sec* (17 to 35 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Demi-sec* (33 to 50 grams of sugar per liter)
- *Doux* (more than 50 grams of sugar per liter)

# COTE DES BLANCS

## Pierre Moncuit

Selling Points:

- Top grower located in the village of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger in the Cote des Blancs
- Limestone soils in Grand Cru of Le Mesnil are prized for their beautiful expressions of minerally Chardonnay (e.g. Salon, Krug “Clos de Mesnil”), also with potential for aging
- One our original producers, which at one point we sold over 400 cs/yr
- Wines all fermented 100% stainless steel to accentuate the brightness and raciness of the *terroir*
- Relatively old vines, averaging 30 years
- Unusual approach in that all the “NV” wines are actually 100% vintage
- Finished with low dosage
- Basically “textbook” Blanc de Blancs from the Cote des Blancs, and a great value compared to the other big names of Le Mesnil

### *Blanc de Blanc Hugues de Coulmet Brut NV*

- From vineyards in Sézanne, south of the Cote des Blancs
- 100% Chardonnay, 100% 2007 vintage
- 9g dosage
- Great value for BTG Blanc de Blancs

### *Blanc de Blanc Grand Cru Cuvée Moncuit-Delos Brut NV*

- 100% Chardonnay from Grand Cru of Le Mesnil
- 100% 2007 vintage
- 8g dosage
- Great example of a Blanc de Blancs from this great *terroir*
- Half-bottles avail too (perfect \$60 list placement!)

### *Blanc de Blanc Grand Cru Vintage Extra Brut 2005*

- 100% tank fermented, 3g dosage
- Mineral lover’s delight!
- \$90 Retail/\$180 on a wine list for Grand Cru Le Mesnil! (Cuvée Nicole VV 02 from 90-100 yr old vines would be \$110 retail/\$210 list)!!!

## Larmandier-Bernier

Selling Points:

- Small, biodynamic grower located in Vertus
- Extremely low yields, 100% hand harvesting, natural yeast fermentation, no fining/filtration
- Produces ripe grapes, reflective of *terroirs*, requiring little or no dosage
- Extremely pure, precise wines with elegance, power and definition
- Top wines are all single-vineyard(s), single-vintage and single varietal
- Overall, uses mix of tank and old *foudre* (4,000L). TDV and Cramant VV are 80% foudre

### ***Blanc de Blancs 1er Cru Extra Brut NV***

- Blanc de Blancs from Vertus (70%), Avize, Oger, Cramant (mix 1er/GC)
- Base of 2007, with 30% of reserve wines (06 & 06)
- Elevage in combo of tank and large wood
- 4g dosage

### ***Terre de Vertus 1er Cru Brut Nature [2006]***

- Signature wine from Larmandier
- Ultimate expression of the Vertus *terroir*
- Single-vintage, single variety, from two vineyards (Les Barillers & Les Faucherets, located mid-slope in Vertus on the Le Mesnil side)
- 80% *foudre*, 20% tank, Non-dosé

### ***Vieilles Vignes de Cramant Grand Cru Extra Brut Vintage 2006***

- 100% Grand Cru from the village of Cramant
- 50-70 year old vines
- 80% *foudre*, 20% tank, 2g dosage

## **Agrapart**

### **Selling Points:**

- Small grower in Avize, producing about 7K cs a year
- 100% *massale* selection Chardonnay, average age 35 years
- No chemical additives in vineyards, plows soil (including some with a horse!)
- Harvests by hand, natural yeast fermentation, including cultivation of indigenous yeasts for 2<sup>nd</sup> fermentation
- Elevage in combo of tank and older, larger barrels (depending on cuvée)
- Bottling without fining and filtration. Low dosage levels

### ***Blanc de Blancs Les 7 Crus***

- Entry level cuvée sourced from grapes in Avize and 6 other adjacent villages (mix 70% Grand Cru/30% 1er Cru vineyards)
- Current cuvée is 50% 2008/50% 2007
- Moderate Dosage @ 9g/l
- Classic Blanc de Blancs profile (citrus, minerals, wet stones)

### ***Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Grand Cru Avizoise 2005***

- Sourced from two of estate's oldest hillside parcels, the Grand Crus of Les Robards and La Voie D'Epernay
- 100% Chardonnay, 100% Grand Cru from 50+ year old vines on South/SE hillsides
- Soils predominantly limestone on upper hillsides, more clay towards the bottom of the slope (still a bed of limestone subsoil)
- Fermented (w/ indigenous yeasts) and aged in used 600 Liter barrels that Agrapart buys from Dagueneau and Olivier Lamy.
- 3 gram dosage (Extra Brut), disgorged July 2011
- Displays powerful, opulent side of Avize. The roundest wine of the lineup with creamy textures (likely due to clay), amazing depth and a delicious spice component.

## Jacques Selosse

### Selling Points:

- The original “Champagne Renegade”!
- Started in the early `80’s taking over the family domaine in Avize
- Wanted to turn the elite Champagne establishment on their heads
- Extreme focus on viticulture (low yields, natural viticulture) to get purest expression of the individual *terroirs* of his territory
- Believes that for a wine to express itself, it needs the oxygen exchange that comes with elevage in wood
- Singularly-styled wines: powerful, textured, highly complex wines that develop with bottle age or with aeration in glass or decanter

### *Initiale Brut NV*

- Entry level Blanc de Blanc (100% Chardonnay)
- Blend of 3 vintages from Avize, Cramant and Oger
- Low dosage (5-7g range, depending on cuvée)

## MONTAGNE DE REIMS

### Coutier

#### Selling Points:

- Small grower in the Grand Cru of Ambonnay, producing about 3000 cs a year
- Another of the great villages in the Montagne de Reims for Pinot Noir. Though their holdings are 2/3 Pinot, 1/3 Chard
- Chardonnay helps provide some freshness and lift to the base of Pinot Noir
- Practicing organic, with treatments only when necessary; we discovered them at an Organic/Biodynamic wine fair in Italy!
- The still sell the majority of their grapes, keep the best for themselves
- All wines fermented in stainless steel, except Cuvée Henry III (mix of barrel and tank)
- South-facing vineyards and clay soils of Ambonnay produce some of the fullest, richest style Champagnes, even with relatively low dosage levels
- Ambonnay also location of Egly-Ouriet

### *Brut Tradition Grand Cru:*

- 75% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay
- Base of 2008 vintage, plus some older reserve wines; 6g dosage
- Round, full-style Champagne, perfect for fall!
- Really good value for a Grand Cru Champagne from the Montagne de Reims
- Classic, old-style label

### *Brut Rosé Grand Cru:*

- 55% Chardonnay, 45% Pinot Noir (assemblage)
- Base of 2008 vintage, plus some older reserve wines; 6g dosage
- Very “Pinot-ey” aromas and flavors
- Great value for 100% Grand Cru Rosé!

## Camille Savès

### Selling Points:

- Small grower in the village of Bouzy in the Montagne de Reims
- One of the great villages for Pinot Noir. Most vineyards South-facing hillsides
- Some of their holdings are in surrounding villages in the Montagne de Reims
- To give their wines extra freshness and delineation, they ferment in glass-lined stainless tanks and block malolactic fermentation
- Full-style wines, with great acid balance!

### *Carte Blanche Brut NV:*

- 75% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay
- 60% 2008 vintage, 40% older vintages
- Pinot from Bouzy, Ambonnay and Tours-sur-Marne (all GC), Chard from Tauxières (1er Cru)
- 12 g dosage to counter non-malo

### *Rosé Brut NV*

- 60% Chard, 40% Pinot Noir (assemblage with 12% Bouzy Rouge)
- Base of 2008 (60%), rest reserve wines; 10g dosage
- Full-style, nicely “Pinot-ey” rosé, with good acid balance
- Always been big fan club for this wine

## VALLEE DE LA MARNE

## Gatinois

### Selling Points:

- Small producer located in the Grand Cru of Ay
- Gatinois is one of our first producers, almost since the beginning!
- Technically in Vallée de la Marne, but *terroir* and exposition more like Montagne de Reims
- South-facing, hillside vineyards, with good % of limestone in the subsoils
- Seloise sources his “Contraste” cuvée with grapes from Ay (“power of the exposition contrasted with the freshness from the soil”)
- Ay also home of Bollinger (still sell grapes to them)
- Much of their Pinot holdings are with a selection of *massale* Petite Pinot d’Ay, a small-yielding, tiny berried clone that is unique to this village
- Spectacular, winey, Pinot-ey, style. Not really sipping Champagne, but could stand up to lots of dishes (including foie gras)

### *Tradition Brut Grand Cru NV*

- 90% Pinot Noir, 10% Chardonnay
- Fermented in tank
- Full, powerful Pinot-based style (great food wine!)

### ***Vintage 2005 Brut Grand Cru***

- 90% Pinot Noir, 10% Chardonnay
- Aged 5 years on the lees; 6 g dosage
- A Pinot Champagne lover's dream!

### ***Rosé Brut Grand Cru***

- 90% Pinot Noir, 10% Chardonnay
- Assemblage-style rosé: Pinot Noir component is Gatinois' still Ay Rouge made from 60 year old vines (about 10% of blend)
- Mostly 2005 vintage (with bit of 04 and 06); 6g dosage
- Full-style, very Pinot-ey Rosé

## **Jérôme Prévost (Champagne La Closerie)**

### **Selling Points:**

- Tiny grower in Gueux, just SW of Reims
- Single-vineyard (Les Beguines), Single-varietal (Pinot Meunier), Single vintage wines
- Worked with Anselme Selosse and made his first vintages (98-01) in Selosse's cellar in Avize
- Viticulture officially in "lutte raisonnée" but no chemical additives to soil unless absolutely necessary (catastrophic circumstances)
- 45 year old vines, cropped extremely low
- Elevage in larger barrels (500/600L), low SO<sub>2</sub>, no fining or filtration
- Bottles Spring after harvest, and disgorges about 16 months later, no dosage
- Believes that Champagnes should age just as great vintage wines do (in bottle)

### ***Les Beguines Extra Brut [2009]:***

- Two hectare vineyard of Les Beguines in Gueux, inherited from his grandmother. Planted in 1950s with massale selection cuttings.
- Harvests all grapes by hand and at a high degree of ripeness
- Ferments with indigenous yeasts using mix of used barriques and 600L demi-muids
- Disgorged 18months after bottling, finished with no dosage as to preserve the sanctity and purity of wine underneath.

## **COTE DES BAR (AUBE)**

### **Moutard**

### **Selling Points:**

- Medium-sized NM (Negociant-Manipulant) located in the Cote des Bar (Buxeuil)
- Produces about 75,000 cs per year (~25% estate grapes/75% purchased)
- Many Grand Marques source Pinot Noir in the Cote des Bars for their blends because of its more Southerly location (~1 hr south of Epernay), ripeness and freshness
- Cote des Bars shares the same Kimmeridgian limestone subsoils and geological substrate as in Chablis and Chavignol
- Has some rare and unique indigenous varieties (Arbanne, Petite Meslier, Pinot Blanc)



### ***Brut Grand Cuvée NV***

- 100% Pinot Noir
- Stainless steel fermented, no malo, 10 g dosage
- Power of Pinot Noir with the freshness of limestone
- 375 mls available too

### ***Rosé de Cuvaison Brut NV***

- 100% Pinot Noir, made with maceration
- 3 years on lees, 10 g dosage
- Great price for a rosé of this price and quality and with continuity
- 375mls available too (not many Rosé half bottles)

### ***Cuvée 6 Cépages, Brut Vintage 2006***

- Made from equal parts of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Petit Meslier, Arbanne, Pinot Blanc
- Fermented in used barriques
- Perfect wine for buyers looking for “off the beaten” -type wines

## **Marie Courtin**

### **Selling Points:**

- Tiny “renegade” grower located in the village of Polisot in the Cote des Bars (Dominique Moreau) – next village over from Cedric Bouchard
- Produces single-vineyard, single-vintage, single varietal (Pinot Noir) from Biodynamically-farmed grapes
- First vintage was 2005
- 100% Hand-harvest, natural yeast fermentations (from yeasts gathered from their vineyards and cultivated at the winery)
- 35-40 year old hillside vineyards
- SE exposure with soils of clay/limestone with bands of Kimmeridgian give the wine extra energy and cut
- Uses pendulums in vineyard and cellar to help in determining decisions in vineyard treatments, harvesting and winemaking
- Recommends serving her wines in regular wine glasses to allow for development through increased aeration

### ***Resonance Extra Brut [2008]:***

- “Résonance” refers to the balancing energies of earth and sky that create the *terroir*
- Aged 100% in stainless steel
- Disgorged in April 2010
- Powerful, “briny” style Pinot Noir Champagne
- Fantastic food wine (anything from fish to poultry and lighter meats)

### ***Efflorescence Extra Brut 2007***

- Sourced in general from the bottom of the hill which has the most power and potential
- Aged in used *Barriques*
- Efflorescence refers to “something that evolves in perpetuity”

- Starting with the evolution in barrel, she feels that this wine in particular will show a very different face at each stage of its development in bottle
- Disgorged in Sept 2009
- Definitely a “food Champagne”, could easily go with game and meat dishes that are not too heavy

#### ***Eloquence Extra Brut 2008***

- 100% Chardonnay
- Massale selection, 15-20 yr old vines
- Vinified in used barrique for both fermentations
- Non-dosé

### **Cedric Bouchard (Roses des Jeanne/Inflorescence)**

#### **Selling Points:**

- Tiny grower in the Cote des Bars located in the village of Celles-sur-Ource
- Former sommelier in Paris
- First vintage was 2000 working with some of his family's vineyards
- One of the hottest new producers in the region, Gault-Millaut's “Champagne producer of the year” in 2008.
- Inflorescence: vineyards that he doesn't own but farms himself (family or leased)
- Roses des Jeanne: his own estate vineyards
- Super low yields in vineyards (~2 tons/acre Inflorescence, ~1 ton/acre on RDJ)
- All wines single-vineyard/vintage/variatal
- 1<sup>st</sup> press, crushed by foot, natural yeast, unfined/unfiltered
- Unlike Selosse and others, he believes in all stainless steel fermentation
- Long slow secondary fermentation in relative cool conditions gives extra fine bubbles
- No dosage at bottling
- Recommends (gently) decanting and serving his wines in regular wine glasses

#### ***Inflorescence La Parcelle [2005]***

- Cedric gives "La Parcelle" the longest aging regimen of all his wines. This wine is unfined, unfiltered, and aged for 80 months.
- Non-dosé, disgorged July 2012

#### ***Roses des Jeanne Les Ursules [2009]:***

- 100% Pinot Noir from 2009
- Aged for 28 months on the lees in stainless steel. Bottled with no dosage
- Disgorged July 2011

#### ***Roses de Jeanne Bolorée Blanc de Blancs 2006***

- From a 0.217 hectare lieu-dit of Pinot Blanc (very old and rare in Champagne) known as La Bolorée.
- Aged for 38 months on the lees in stainless steel. Bottled with no dosage
- Disgorged July 2009