



Sparkling Wine

Domaine Roger Luquet Crémant de Bourgogne Brut NV

I very much liked this Crémant de Bourgogne last year and the new release is a fine follow-up to last year's effort. The deep and vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a mélange of apple, pear, warm biscuits, stony minerality and orange peel. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and complex, with a good core of fruit, quite refined bubbles for its genre, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the clean and zesty finish. This does not have the polish of Champagne, but it has the depth, body and length and is not far from short on personality. Fine juice and a lovely value. 2012-2016. **88.**

2009 Crémant du Jura Brut Rosé- Domaine Labet

The 2009 Crémant du Jura Brut Rosé from Domaine Labet is perhaps a touch riper on the nose than the very lovely 2008 version I tasted last year, but it shares the impressively refined *mousse*, lovely complexity and fine base of soil of its immediate predecessor. The complex and quite impressive nose offers up a smoky mélange of dried cherries, orange zest, a bit of bonfire, rye toast, lovely soil flavors and almost a bit of spiced meats. On the palate the wine is quite nicely focused, full-bodied and frothy, with lovely mid-palate depth, again, most elegant *mousse*,

crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is really a lovely sparkling wine and dynamite value. 2012-2016+. **89+**.

Non-Rosé Champagne

Laherte Frères “Les Empreintes” Extra Brut NV

The Les Empreintes bottling from Laherte is a blend of sixty percent chardonnay and twenty percent each pinot noir and pinot meunier, but with a third of the chardonnay being from the Chardonnay Muscate clone that tends to produce wines that are very perfumed and floral in character. A significant percentage of this wine is barrel-fermented as well, and the new release offers up a truly exceptional bouquet that shows plenty of Chardonnay Muscate influence in its mélange of delicious apples, pears, lovely soil tones, brioche, citrus zest and a floral topnote of lemon blossoms and hints of jasmine. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with brisk acids, fine focus and balance, elegant *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the snappy and completely dry finish. To my palate, this is a touch on the young side for primetime drinking, as it misses a bit of buffering *dosage* at this young stage and will really be better with a year or two of bottle age. However, I have little doubt that Extra Brut purists will find this ready to go right from the outset! Either way, it is a very impressively complex and classy glass of bubbly. 2013-2025. **91+**.

2006 Champagne Gatinois Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Aÿ)

The 2006 Gatinois Brut Millésime just arrived here in New York as my first release of Issue 40 was being sent out and I was very happy that the container was unloaded quickly and I had a chance to taste this lovely wine and include it in this follow-up report. The 2006 Gatinois is superb, offering a deep and pinot noir-defined bouquet of apples, warm bread, orange peel, smoky overtones, a beautifully complex base of soil and a lovely touch of Bollinger-like nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with superb acidity and focus, lovely mid-palate depth, very elegant *mousse* and a long, zesty and laser-like finish that closes with equal amounts of pure fruit and mineral drive. Really a terrific bottle of bubbly from this fine vintage that really benefited from an idyllic *fin de saison*. This is very classy juice indeed! 2012-2025+. **93**.

2005 Moutard Père et Fils “Cuvée des Six Cépages” Brut Millésime

The 2005 Cuvée des Six Cépages from Moutard Père et Fils is an outstanding example of the vintage, with impressive structural integrity and excellent, nascent complexity on both the nose and palate. The youthful and classy nose jumps from the glass in a very unique and smoky blend of green apple, quince, lemon peel, stony minerality, bread dough, dried violets and a topnote of smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and lovely, with an excellent core, fine focus and balance, refined bubbles and outstanding mineral drive on the long and snappy finish. This is eminently drinkable today, but I would guess that an array of secondary complexities will emerge with a bit more bottle age. Fine juice. 2012-2022+. **92+**.

2002 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs Brut

I am deeply indebted to Jeremy Noye, wine buyer for Zachy’s here in New York for alerting me to the release of the 2002 Comtes de Champagne, as I tasted through the Taittinger samples early on in my preparation for this article and the 2000 was still the vintage of Comtes de Champagne that was sent to me in the spring. I have been looking forward to the release of the 2002 Comtes de Champagne for several years now and the first taste of this classic in the making certainly did not disappoint. The deep and stunning nose soars from the glass in a pure and toasty mélange of delicious apples, pears, brioche, just a hint of wood char, a gloriously

complex base of chalky soil tones, orange zest, incipient notes of pastry cream, a dollop of lemon blossoms and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and supremely elegant, with a great core of fruit, utterly refined *mousse*, crisp acids, superb balance and delineation and great length and grip on the seamless and absolutely dancing finish. Given the ripeness of the 2002 vintage, the stunning refinement and elegance of this Comtes de Champagne is absolutely magical! A great, great wine. 2012-240. **97+**.

1998 Henriot “Cuvée des Enchanteleurs” Brut

It had been a year since I last tasted the 1998 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs, which was one of the most spectacular wines I tasted for last year’s Champagne report. A year of bottle age has simply allowed this wine to just start to blossom, but it remains a young, superbly structured and brilliant wine in the making. The bouquet offers up a glorious and very vibrant blend of ripe apple, tart orange, a beautifully complex base of stony minerality, brioche and a topnote of lemon zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with very refined *mousse*, excellent acidity, flawless focus and balance and a very, very long and zesty finish. While this superb wine is certainly approachable today, I would be strongly inclined to keep it tucked away in the cellar for at least three or four more years and allow its secondary layers of complexity to really come to the fore. It is one of the most stunning wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste from Champagne Henriot. 2015-2035. **96**.

Brut Rosé and Extra Brut Rosé

Champagne Gatinois Brut Rosé NV (Grand Cru- Aÿ)

The non-vintage Gatinois Brut Rosé is a blend of ninety percent pinot noir and ten percent chardonnay, with the still pinot that is blended back into the wine for color aged for one year in older Burgundy barrels prior to blending. The wine goes through complete malolactic fermentation and is raised in stainless steel. This has always been one of my favorite growers, as I love the classic Aÿ style of these wines that to me recalls the old days of Bollinger. The current release of the Gatinois Brut Rosé is a pale salmon color and offers up a deep, complex and very vibrant nose of tangerine, smoky notes, sourdough bread, a touch of blood orange, beautiful soil tones and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and snappy, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, very elegant *mousse* and a long, zesty and complex finish. This seems a bit younger and racier in style than the last few renditions of this wine I have tasted, with great potential to evolve with bottle age and perhaps a bit more flexibility in terms of service than the more overtly “winey” style of this wine in the last few releases. Fine, fine juice. 2012-2025+. **92+**.

Laherte Frères Brut Rosé NV

The current release of the Laherte Frères Brut Rosé is a very pretty and elegant wine, with a pale salmon color and an outstanding bouquet of tangerine, white cherry, chalky soil tones, warm biscuits, rose petals and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is young, focused, nascently complex and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, a brisk girdle of acidity, pinpoint bubbles and a very long, tightly-knit and an impressively balanced finish. I am not sure if this is a touch younger than last year’s release, or did the house perhaps dial down the *dosage* just a touch this year? In any event, this is a beautiful bottle of Brut Rosé, but it is still a tad on the young side and a year or two in the cellar will really pay dividends. 2013-2025. **90+**.

Laherte Frères “les Beaudiers” Rosé Saignée “Vieilles Vignes” Extra Brut NV

The Laherte Frères “les Beaudiers” Rosé Saignée “Vieilles Vignes” bottling is comprised of one hundred percent, old vine pinot meunier has to be one of the most beautifully colored

Rosés, with its vibrant, light cherry red truly striking when poured in a flute. I had loved last year's version and this year's is not far off the pace of that excellent wine, soaring from the glass in a vibrant and complex mélange of cherries, blood orange, a touch of meatiness, lovely soil tones, a gentle touch of spice, wheat toast and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very "winey" in style, with a superb core of fruit, bright acids, elegant *mousse* and a very long, intense and youthfully complex finish. This is a terrific wine that really needs to be served through the course of the meal, rather than as an *aperitif*, and should age very well indeed. 2012-2025. **91.**