

ANNUAL CHAMPAGNE REPORT

The run-up to the Christmas period is always a good time to publish champagne reviews. All the champagnes except the Krug Clos de Mesnil and Louis Roederer Cristal were tasted at Tyson Stelzer's annual events in Sydney and Canberra. Based on the wines reviewed below, the average quality of champagne at the moment is pleasing enough, but the entry level wines from some major houses provide cause for concern.

NON VINTAGE

NV Billecart-Salmon Brut Réserve Very perfumed and fresh. Dry and creamy, with a pleasing hint of breadiness. Lovely NV. (\$70.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.winestar.com.au/billecart-salmon-brut-reserve>

NV Pierre Peters Cuvée de Réserve Blanc de Blancs Precise, fresh apple aromas. Long, crisp and clean. Delightful apéritif. (\$80.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/pierre-peters-cuvee-de-reserve-brut-nv-963042.html>

NV Alfred Gratien Brut Rich and complex, with hints of brioche. Very fresh. Dry, long and textured. (\$80.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/alfred-gratien-brut-nv-940516.html>

NV Piper Heidsieck Essential Cuvée Brut Powerful, fresh and complex bouquet. Long, creamy, dry palate. (\$80.00) ★★★★★
<https://emperorchampagne.com.au/products/piper-heidsieck-essentielle-cuvee-reserve>

NV Bernard Bremont Grand Cru Brut Lovely nose which is musky (pinot noir) but restrained. Creamy and precise. (\$75.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.cellarit.com.au/wine-85529-bernard-bremont-grand-cru-brut-champagne-nv.aspx>

NV Ayala Brut Majeur Very fresh, with a whiff of pinot noir musk. Plenty of flavour and a very fine mousse. Long and dry. (\$72.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/ayala-brut-majeur-nv-398879.html>

NV Pol Roger Pure Extra Brut Fresh. Subtle bready complexity. Plenty of flavour. Pleasingly dry finish. (\$106.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/pol-roger-pure-nv-785391.html>

NV Veuve Fourny & Fils Grande Réserve Premier Cru Fresh green apple aromatics. Tight, dry, creamy and long. ★★★★★



NV Agrapart & Fils Terroirs Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Slightly aldehydic, but still shows good fruit on the nose. A fine mousse, linear acid and flavour persistence highlight a bone dry apéritif style. ★★★★★

NV Billecart-Salmon Blanc de Blancs Quite floral and fruity. Substantial for a blanc de blancs, and shows some dosage sweetness which is balanced by acidity. ★★★★★

NV Joseph Perrier Brut Royale Fresh, with a faint breadiness. Clean, lively and relatively dry. ★★★★★

NV Lanson Extra Age Brut In good condition, with mature nuttiness. It has plenty of flavour to balance the racy malic acid. ★★★★★

NV Louis Roederer Brut Premier The nose is rich, showing perfumed pinot meunier aromatics. Finishes a little too sweet, which is surprising. ★★★★★

NV Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve Good weight of fruit with a touch of breadiness. The palate is quite dry, with some grip. ★★★★★

NV Veuve Fourny & Fils Blanc de Blanc Vertus Premier Cru Fresh green apple aromas. The palate is creamy and full of life, but comparatively simple. ★★★★★

NV Dom Ruinhart Blanc de Blancs Fresh and delicate. Slightly too sweet, but is an enjoyable apéritif. ★★★★★

NV Heidsieck & Co Monopole Blue Top Fresh, musky & bready. Full flavoured and fairly dry. ★★★★★☆

NV Veuve Clicquot Extra Old Restrained, but shows a hint of bready complexity. Short, dry palate. ★★★★★☆

NV Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Quite pinot-driven. Full flavoured, but too sweet. ★★★

NV Bollinger Special Cuvée Nutty, with some aldehyde. Fresh underneath. Big, but slightly broad. ★★★

NV Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial Light, and quite neutral. Very simple. ★★★☆

NV Pommery Brut Royale Slightly dull, with a fairly coarse palate. Plain. ★★★☆

VINTAGE

2004 Krug Clos du Mesnil The chardonnay presence is strong, but there's much more – fresh croissant and lightly toasted nuts, for example. This is a profound champagne of great length, with a supremely fine mousse and a structural quality that is seldom encountered. Sadly it's now unavailable, and the asking price was around \$1,600, but it sure sets a standard for this group. If you're really keen, I believe Glengarry Wines in Auckland has a bottle or two. ★★★★★

<https://www.glengarrywines.co.nz/items/45813/krug%20blanc%20de%20blancs%20clos%20du%20mesnil>

2008 Louis Roederer Cristal I tasted this alongside the Krug, and although the Cristal is magnificent, the Krug won the day in my view. There's the delightfully complexing baked apple and brioche aromas for a start. Then we have an exciting palate that defines creaminess.

(\$399.00) ★★★★★

<https://www.nicks.com.au/2008-louis-roederer-cristal-champagne>

2008 Alfred Gratien Cuvée Paradis Very fresh, and subtly complex, showing nougat and brioche aromas. The palate is wonderfully creamy and dry. (\$155.00) ★★★★★

<https://champagnegallery.com.au/collections/alfred-gratien/products/alfred-gratien-cuvee-paradis-brut-2008>



2007 Alfred Gratien Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut Fresh, with some apple overtones, together with brioche. The palate is a delight - fine, long creamy and dry. An classic apéritif. (\$120.00) ★★★★★

<https://champagnegallery.com.au/>

2010 Ayala Blanc de Blancs Delicate. Subtly nutty. Delightfully fine and creamy. Nails it as an apéritif. (\$115.00) ★★★★★
<https://champagnegallery.com.au/collections/ayala/products/ayala-blanc-de-blanc-2010>

2007 Bollinger La Grande Année Bready and vibrant. Powerful, tight, long and creamy. (\$190.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.jimscellars.com.au/collections/sparkling-champagne/products/bollinger-la-grande-annee>

2004 Bollinger RD Powerful and fresh. Nutty aldehyde is present, but not overdone. The palate is all class. (\$360.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.boccaccio.com.au/buy/bollinger-r.d.-2004/1233>

2009 Pol Roger Brut Vintage Vibrant and subtly complex. Long, creamy and satisfying. (\$120.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.danmurphys.com.au/>

2008 Bernard Bremont Grand Cru Millesime Musk and faint nougat aromas. Powerful and creamy, with lively acidity and a long finish. (\$115.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.cellarit.com.au/>

2009 Pol Roger Blanc de Blancs A fresh 100% chardonnay showing a touch of maturity. The palate is fine and long, with a pleasant grip on finish. (\$130.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.winesquare.com.au/catalog/product/view/id/6181/s/2009-pol-roger-vintage-blanc-de-blancs-brut-champagne/>

2012 Louis Roederer Vintage This champagne has a quite primary, fruit-driven nose with a very subtle nuttiness. The palate is relatively dry, creamy and long, delivering drinking pleasure. ★★★★★

2005 Charles Heidsieck Vintage Brut Rich brioche-scented nose. Flavoursome and very drinkable. At its peak. ★★★★★

2008 Piper Heidsieck Vintage Brut Quite rich fruit with a bready touch. Some firmness on a long, but fine palate. ★★★★★

2004 Pommery Cuvée Louise Fresh, with attractive bready autolysis. However, the palate is slightly coarse, lacking fineness. Disappointing. ★★☆☆

2009 Moët et Chandon Simple apart from a touch of sulphides. Lacks depth and complexity. ★★☆☆

ROSÉ

2009 Pol Roger Brut Rosé Fresh, with hints of strawberry and bready autolysis. Dry and creamy. (\$136.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/pol-roger-rose-2363.html>

2006 Charles Heidsieck Rosé Bronze-pink. Fresh pinot muskiness. Classic rosé - creamy and dry. (\$162.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.princewinestore.com.au/shop/index.php/category-list/liquor/sparkling-wine/charles-heidsieck-rose-2006-978814.html>

NV Alfred Gratien Brut Rosé Pale pink. Perfumed red fruits. Dry and firm. Just enough dosage for balance. ★★★★★

NV Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé Palest pink. Fragrant red fruits nose. Appealing grip and palate weight. ★★★★★

NV Perrier Jouët Blason Rosé Fresh, subtle bready aroma. Dry and fresh. ★★★★★

NV Bollinger Rosé Pale pink. A powerful champagne. Slight aldehyde. Attractive musky pinot. Full flavoured but broad. ★★★★★

NV Charles Heidsieck Rosé Pale pink. Fresh, restrained, musky. Hint of bread. Uncompromisingly dry, with some grip. ★★★★★

NV Piper Heidsieck Rosé Sauvage Brut Very deep pink. Red fruits nose. Powerful and dry. Almost sparkling red. ★★★

NV Veuve Clicquot Brut Rosé Dull, broad and hard. ★★

The overall quality of the line-up is strong. The percentage of wines at ★★★★★ and above is testimony to that. Looking for the best quality:price ratios, search no further than Alfred Gratien and Pol Roger. The latter is relatively easy to obtain, but the Alfred Gratiens will certainly reward those who seek them out.

Some of the larger houses appear to be focusing more on the mass market than champagne enthusiasts. Simple, over-sweet wines fail to impress.

Lester Jesberg

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