

CHAMPAGNE

DEFINITION

Champagne is a sparkling white wine made in the delimited region of Champagne in France by following the méthode champenoise.

- The name comes from **area + process**.
- Some countries use the name by following the process only.
- Unlike the other areas, in Champagne the village names are not important as all champagnes are blended.
- Champagnes are branded by the shipper's name.
- Most northerly wine-region of France.
- The principal towns are Bouzy, Reims and Epernay.
- Champagne, the **celebration wine**, is the only French appellation wine without AOC printed on the label.
- Shippers own very small proportions of the vineyards - rest they buy from small growers.
- The three grapes used in the manufacturing process of Champagne include :
Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier
- Total area: 27,000 acres.
- 2,000 ft above the sea-level which was once the seabed.
- Fossilised animals render the soil chalky.
- Catches and reflects sunshine —unique sugar-acid balance.
- River Marne bisects the region horizontally.

- North of Marne:
 - Montagne de Reims
 - Vallée de la Marne
 - very cold, grapes need to be picked early - pinot noir and pinot meunière (ripens early)
- South of Marne:
 - Côte des Blancs
 - east facing slopes - warmer and longer summers - more sunshine.
 - chardonnay
- White wines, made from black and white grapes, are blended from several areas.
- **Blanc de Blanc**
 - Only from white grapes - lacks bouquet and balance.
- **Blanc de noir**
 - Only from black grapes - heavy bouquet but lacks freshness and finesse.
- Some **Rosé** also (Pink Champagnes).

MÉTHODE CHAMPENOISE

Pressing

- Picked and sent to the hydraulic press - pressed four times.
- Only the first two pressings are used - rest for **coteaux champenoise** (still Champagne).



First fermentation

- In cask - starts about 8 hours after pressing.

- A dry, still wine is produced. Temperature maintained at 18-20° C.
- Left in cask for about 5 months - raked and fined during this period.



Assemblage

- Any no. of wines from around 250 villages.
- Highly paid wine-tasters/blenders ensure brand-continuity.



Coupage / Dosage de tirage

- Yeast and rock candy (from sugarcane) dissolved in old wine (liqueur de tirage).
- Added for secondary fermentation which is carried out in bottle.



Bottling & Secondary Fermentation

- Immediately after dosage, bottled & corked - secured with a wire muzzle and agrafé.
- Bottles placed mis sur latte in the natural chalky caverns - constant cold temperature ideal for Secondary Fermentation.
- Temperature maintained at 10-12° C.
- Secondary fermentation starts after about six weeks.
- Mis sur latte for about 2 to 5 years (minimum 1 year for non-vintage and 3 years for vintage champagnes).



Remuage

(removal of debris by the remneur)

- Bottles placed at 45° on the pupître.

- Everyday the remneur grasps and shakes each bottle —sediments dislodged.
- Remneur changes the angle slightly.
- In 3 to 5 months the bottles are brought to sur le pointe.



Dégorgement

- The neck is frozen.
- The muzzle is taken off and the debris go out like a bullet.
- Some wine is lost.



Dosage

- Similar wine + sugar (as, and if, required) = liqueur d'expédition
- Added to replace lost wine.



Final Dressing

- Corked finally and permanently.
- Wired and dressed in foil.
- * Regularly shipped to more than 160 countries.*

SWEETNESS IN CHAMPAGNES

Brute / Nature

Very dry: 0.5% to 1.5% sugar

Très Sec

Fairly dry: 1.5% to 3% sugar

Sec

Dry or medium sweet: 3% to 5% sugar

Demi Sec

Quite sweet: 5% to 7% sugar

Doux

Very sweet: 7% or more sugar

CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES

Quart: 185 ml

Pint: 375 ml

Regular / Standard: 750 ml

Magnum: 2 bottles

Jeroboam: 4 bottles

Rheoboam: 6 bottles

Methuselah: 8 bottles

Salmanazar: 12 bottles

Balthazar: 16 bottles

Nebuchadnezar: 20 bottles

OTHER METHODS OF MANUFACTURING SPARKLING WINES

Cuvé Closé

- Also known as **Charmat/Tank/Bulk** process.
- Started in France by M. Charmat.
- Secondary fermentation in large sealed tanks.

- Only 10 days to complete.
- Cheaper.

Transfer Method

- Similar to méthode champenoise but remuage is replaced by filtration.

Impregnation Method

- Carbon-di-oxide is added from a cylinder.
- Cheapest method.

MORE ABOUT SPARKLING WINES

- **Vin mousseux** - Sparkling wine of France
- **Crémant** - Bottle-fermented sparkling wine made outside Champagne.
E.g. Crémant de Bourgogne
- **Coteaux Champenoise** - Still wines from Champagne
- **Vin Petillant** - Slightly sparkling wine (in the USA: **Crackling wine**).
- **Vin Perlant** - Very slightly sparkling wine.
- **Sekt** - German sparkling wine.
- **Schumwein** - German sparkling wine.
- **Spumante** - Italian sparkling wine.
- **Espumante** - Portuguese sparkling wine.
- **Cava / Espumosa** - Spanish sparkling wine.

USES OF CHAMPAGNE

- One of the most delicate and delightful wines - lengthy process - never cheap - **glamour wine**.

- **Celebration wine** - indispensable at weddings, receptions, formal banquets, etc.
- Good accompaniment - Brut with soup, Sec with mousse, etc.
- A cold glass of Champagne - excellent apéritif.
- Mixed drinks - Black Velvet, Champagne Cocktail, etc.
- Kitchen - used for curing French ham.

IMPORTANT SHIPPERS

Laurent-Perrier, Perrier-Jouet, Taittinger, Charles Heidsieck, Deutz, Joseph Perrier, Moët & Chandon, G. H. Mumm, Piper Heidsieck, Pol Roger, Pommery, Bollinger, Canard-Duchine, Henriot, Krug, Mercier, Louis Roederer, Ruinart, Veuve Clicquot, Dom Pérignon