

THE TOP 39 CENTURION CHAMPAGNES

Every sommelier has his or her own views on what makes a really great champagne. Thomas Midulla asked several of the biggest names in wine for their favourites to compile the Centurion list of excellent bubbly

FULVIO PIERANGELINI
Chef, two-Michelin starred restaurant Gambero Rosso, San Vincenzo, Tuscany
→ **LEGRAS '96 Selezione Gambero Rosso**

A champagne you can enjoy with every kind of food; not too sophisticated but extremely good nevertheless.
www.champagne-legras.fr
→ **SALON '90**

A very mature blanc de blancs, which I particularly love for its full and rich flavour.
www.salondelamotte.com
→ **ANDRE ET JACQUES BEAUFORT, Demi-sec '88**
This is a champagne of high complexity and depth – an abundance of sensations.
www.ajbeaufort.free.fr

LAURIANN GREENE-SOLLIN AND JEAN-PIERRE SOLLIN

Sommelier-consuls and owners of French Wine Explorers
→ **JACQUES SÉLOSSE, Brut Blanc de Blanc Grand Cru, Cuvee Substance**
Sélosse vinifies and ages his reserve wines in oak, giving them a rich, wine-like quality that is atypical and fascinating, more like a great Burgundy.
Avize, tel +33 3 2657 5356.
→ **POL ROGER, Brut Vintage '98**

This cuvee combines the power of pinot noir with the finesse of chardonnay, but in 1998, it's really the character of the chardonnay that comes through – pure elegance.
www.polroger.com

→ **ERICK DE SOUSA, Brut Blanc de Blanc Grand Cru, Cuvee des Caudalies '99**
Erick is one of Champagne's most perfectionistic winemakers, and it shows in this beautifully crafted, supremely elegant wine.
www.champagneedesousa.com

→ **GATINOIS, Brut Grand Cru '99**

The great majority of pinot noir in the blend gives a slightly amber colour to the wines – Gatinois is powerful and perfumed, with wonderful aromas of small red fruit and brioche that make it a great food wine.
Aÿ, tel +33 3 2655 1426.
→ **SALON '95**
With the perfect combination of power and finesse, this great vintage affirms Salon's position as Champagne's best boutique producer.

DANIELLE G PRICE Executive Director of Wine, Wynn Las Vegas
→ **RENÉ GÉOFFROY, Rosé de Saignée, Premier Cru, Brut**
Brilliantly concentrated with

surgingly aromatics, this wine is deep yet delicate with flawless elegance married to intense concentration.

www.champagne-geoffroy.com

→ **TARLANT, Cuvee Louis, Brut**
Very rare – I purchased the entire allocation for Nevada so this incredibly vibrant and sexy champagne can only be experienced at Wynn.
www.tarlant.com

→ **VILMART & Cie, Cuvee Creation, Premier Cru, Brut Rilly-la-Montagne '96**

Complex and voluptuous with piercing acidity and exotic wild fruits. You will be amazed and enchanted by its youth and vibrancy. Green herbal flavours lead into a sumptuously silky finish which will linger in your memory for a lifetime.
www.champagnevilmart.com

→ **EGLY-OURIET, Cuvee Speciale, Grand Cru**

An epic champagne – incredibly rich and voluptuous with alluring brioche and hazelnut aromatics. On the palate this champagne is like Grand Cru Burgundy with bubbles.
Ambonnay, tel +33 3 2657 0077.

→ **JEAN LALLEMAND**

This tiny little winery produces one of the most distinctive and memorable wines I have ever tasted. Silky,

stylish and racy, with crisp acidity, this lively champagne has graceful elegance.

JÜRGEN FENDT

Sommelier, Hotel Bareiss, Black Forest, placed 4th at the Meilleur Sommelier du Monde 2004 competition

→ **EGLY-OURIET, Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru Brut**
A truly powerful and intensive champagne from the vines of 'Vieilles Vignes'. Degorged in December 2005 after maturing for 54 months, this sparkling wine is of the highest quality and perfectly captures the local terroir.

→ **POMMERY '89, Cuvee Louise Brut Magnum**

A mature champagne, whose best form is found in the magnum bottle. The subtle nut aroma is complemented by the fresh blend of mushroom and brioche; a hedonistic product, more similar to the 'Goût Anglais'.

www.pommery.com

→ **DEUTZ '96, Cuvee William Deutz Rosé Brut**

A dream rosé that possesses a subtle salmon-pink hue blended with a delicate glint of copper. With an excellent perlage, this champagne has a perfume of pink grapefruit, ▶

Champagne: the most famous drink in the world

raspberry and red currants and lingers tastily on the palate.

www.champagne-deutz.com
→ **PHILIPPE GONET, Roy Soleil Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Brut**
'Fresh', 'bubbly': just two of the descriptions that come to mind on first sampling this delightful champagne. Whether as an aperitif or just to relax, this champagne is the perfect companion.
www.champagne-philippe-gonet.com

→ **BILLECART-SALMON '95, Clos Ste Hilaire Brut**
The first vintage of this exceptional champagne.
www.champagne-billecart.fr

ERIC BEAUMARD

Sommelier and Restaurant Director, Le Cinq (Four Seasons George V Paris), Silver medal winner of the World's Best Sommelier championship 1998
→ **DEUTZ '99, Amour de Deutz Blanc de Blancs**
From the best grounds of the Côte des Blancs, this is a champagne with great delicacy and elegance. It has a preservation period of 10 years.
→ **DIEBOLT VALLOIS '95, Fleur de Passion**

This excellent champagne was produced by a winemaker from the area of Cramant. Originally from 50-year-old vines of chardonnay, it's a vintage which reflects the dynamism of the winemakers in the best region of Champagne.
Cramant, tel +33 3 2657 5492.
→ **KRUG vintage '95**

For the departure of Rémy Krug; a great vintage where the pinots noirs and the chardonnays combine both strength and delicacy. The first impression is rich but the final impression is a complex and lasting one. All in all, a great champagne!
www.krug.com

→ **DOM RUINART**

Blanc de Blancs '96
As you would expect from the oldest champagne maker – traditionally excellent quality. An ideal aperitif champagne.
www.ruinart.com
→ **LOUISE POMMERY Rosé '99**
A rosé with a sparkling and discreet body colour. It also has a feeling in the mouth of surprising density. A great example of perfect harmony and sophistication.

DAVID STURNO

Manager and sommelier, Country restaurant and champagne bar, NYC
→ **LARMANDIER-BERNIER Vertus Blanc de Blanc Brut 1er Cru**
My favourite of the 'grower champagnes' – small champagne houses which control the entire process from owning the vineyards to producing the finished wine. These are hand-made artisan products. Quality is very high, production tends to be low. This wine has got breeding and class, richness and complexity.
Vertus, tel +33 3 2652 1324.

→ **HENRIOT Blanc de Blanc**

As an alternative to the other large champagne houses like Moët and Clicquot this is readily available in most markets and offers full body, richness and decent class for the money. Priced such that a bottle should always be in the fridge.
www.champagne-henriot.com
→ **KRUG Clos de Mesnil '90**
The single greatest champagne produced and priced accordingly. It comes from a minuscule parcel planted with only chardonnay within the tiny village of Mesnil. Krug is the sole owner. The wine is elegant, racy, utterly distinct and seemingly ageless. It is without peer. Its rarity certainly adds a hefty premium but

you'll never hear me say it's not worth trying at least once.

→ **L AUBRY Rosé Sable 2000**
I'm not such a big fan of the packaging but what's inside the bottle is another story. Nuts, spices and raspberry notes can be found in this bottling. An intriguing wine which for me is a quintessential rosé champagne.

www.champagne-aubry.com

→ **GASTON-CHIQUET Carte d'Or Brut '99**

Tough to find but worth ordering specially from your wine shop. Another grower champagne. Wrapped inside its rich full body is a citrus core, making this champagne impeccably balanced and long.
www.gastonchiquet.com

ENRICO BERNARDO

World champion of Sommeliers at the Meilleur Sommelier du Monde 2004 competition
→ **S de SALON '96**

A perfect example of purity and balance in its ingredients, this is an icon of champagne-perfection with its intricacy and depth. The aroma of lemons, tangerine and white pepper makes it ideal as an aperitif or combined with prawns. Excellent with Osciette royal caviar.

→ **PHILIPPONAT Clos des Goisses '92**

Beautifully composed, with hints of nut, butter, peach and acacia-honey, it offers an intriguing mix of flavours in the mouth. Perfect when combined with white meats or a truffle-risotto.
www.champagnephilipponat.com

→ **PIERRE MONCUIT '96**

Without doubt one of the best in terms of price/quality ratio. It has a shining, gold colour, whilst a strong aroma offers hints of toasted bread, apricots and mushrooms.
www.pierre-moncuit.fr
→ **LAURENT PERRIER Rosé**

A great tribute to rosé champagnes: wonderfully fruity with flavours of strawberry, cherry and a hint of black pepper. After a few seconds it spreads a delicate, floral hint like roses. A safe investment for those who love rich rosés.

www.laurent-perrier.com

→ **BOLLINGER R D '90**

A strong structure with a complex blend of tastes. The powerful aroma conjures up the smell of almonds, truffle, brioche, cinnamon and apple-jam. Very soft in the mouth and generous in the body. Excellent when combined with crab or veal.
www.champagne-bollinger.fr

JOAO PIRES Sommelier,

The Capital, London
→ **RUINART Blanc de Blancs**
The perfect initiation. The right pearl as an aperitif. The simplicity, elegance and purity of chardonnay.

→ **BILLECART-SALMON Cuvee Elisabeth**

Irresistible with a loved one with its coppery-pink colour; delicate and sublime.
→ **KRUG Clos du Mesnil**
Unforgettable for just a few very demanding people.

SEBASTIEN MORICE

Sommelier, Papillon Restaurant, London
→ **SALON Blanc de Blancs '95**
Boutique champagne house. Very exclusive. The style is rich and opulent but remains elegant.

→ **GOSSET Brut Rosé**

The oldest champagne house. Always made with very high standards of quality. Vinous but delicate.
www.champagne-gosset.com

→ **JACQUESON**

Cuvee 730 Non Vintage
Classy, quite complex, with a lot of backbone
Dizy, tel +33 3 2655 6811. ●