

# Tasting Notes

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*Roger C. Bohmrich, MW*

*Wines are rated on a scale of 5.*

*1 – poor, possibly flawed*

*2 - below average or deficient*

*3 - good, well-made*

*4 - excellent*

*5 - exceptional*

*( ) – denotes potential with bottle aging*

*The notes that follow are for  
Champagnes tasted in late 2011 at  
trade events and the annual  
tasting sponsored by the  
Institute of Masters of Wine  
(North America)*

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**Pierre Gimonnet**

Gimonnet is a *récoltant manipulant* who produces Champagne, almost entirely from Chardonnay, on a rather large estate of 28 hectares divided between the grand cru villages of Cramant and Chouilly, the premier cru village of Cuis (16 ha) and a small holding in Vertus. Cuis plays an important role in their style, adding delicacy and elegance. Some naysayers contend that Cuis dilutes the concentration of the grand cru components. Nonetheless, I am hardly alone in finding the finished product to be pure, ethereal and utterly delicious. The Gimonnet Champagnes have a dosage of 8 g/l or less, adding to their sense of weightlessness on the palate.

All the Champagnes below are 100% Chardonnay except for Paradoxe.

**“Selection Belles Années” NV \*\*\*(+)**

C- pale yellow gold with delicate small bubbles (this is only about 4 atmospheres)

N- soft, pure, subtle & marked by yellow plum & quince notes

P- silky rather than strongly effervescent; has ample concentration & a particularly lovely feel, ending with a racy, very dry, saline aftertaste – This bottle is 85% 2007 & 15% 2006 vintages.

**Brut Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs NV \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with fine mousse

N- pronounced & intense for a blanc de blancs; enticing white peach, lemon peel accents

P- cool, polished, very elegant; this is very fine & very delicate; perfect feel & equilibrium; very lasting – This is entirely from Cuis, mostly 2008 vintage plus 4 others, 2 years en tirage and a dosage of 8 g/l.

**“Oenophile” Maxi Brut 2004 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold with yellow highlights & very fine mousse

N- lovely & inviting, offering complex subtleties - butter, quince, star fruit

P- transparent; so pure & so clean; very long & understated; fine, marked acid spine – An 80/20 blend of grand & premier cru origins, 6 years en tirage, and zero dosage.

**“Cuvée Gastronomer” Brut 2006 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold with barely visible stream of tiny bubbles (as for the Selection, about 4 atmospheres)

N- pure, etched; cold unsalted butter, citrus pith, stony

P- beautifully composed; very subtly nuanced; pure, quite long; elegant & exquisite in its finesse – Also an 80/20 grand & premier cru blend, 4 years en tirage, and 7.5 g/l dosage.

**“Special Club” 2004 \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw-yellow gold with tiny mousse

N- has depth & presence, a sense of substance; nuanced dried peach, apple & butter

P- impressive volume from entry to finish; highly expressive & lasting; very firm backbone – 88% grand cru with a large portion of Cramant/12% Cuis from old vines, 6 years en tirage, 6 g/l dosage.

**Blanc de Blancs “Fleurons” Brut 2005 \*\*\*+**

C- pale yellow gold with fine mousse

N- focused, rather piercing; suggestions of hazelnut & truffle

P- seems very open across palate; perhaps missing a bit of center; subtle notes of post-disgorgement aging surface at end – About ¾ grand cru with Chouilly the largest component, 5 years en tirage, 6 g/l dosage.

**“Paradoxe” Brut 2004 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale yellow gold with fine mousse

N- broad, relatively powerful (fuller than the rest of the range); offers accents of dried yellow peach, sultana, white pepper & stone

P- fills the mouth immediately with real volume, flesh, layering of flavor & length; beautifully composed; very dry finale with subtle yellow fruits & other accents – Contains 60% Pinot Noir/40% Chardonnay from a variety of grand & premier cru villages, 6 years en tirage, 8 g/l dosage.

**Pierre Péters**

**Pierre Péters is a blanc de blancs specialist, and 90% of their holdings are in the grand cru villages of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger (two-thirds of their parcels), Avize and Cramant. These are ethereal, fabulously elegant Champagnes.**

**“Cuvée Réserve” Brut \*\*\*\***

C- very pale straw gold with fine mousse

N- extremely subtle, cool with delicate stony-lemon pith notes

P- great precision & a crystalline transparency; supremely elegant; delicately expressive finish – a model of purity

**“Cuvée Spéciale” Les Chétilons 2004 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold with fine mousse

N- very delicately nuanced yet possesses very good intensity ; refined, cool, stony

P- starts slowly, then gains momentum through finale; very fine, graceful, pure; subtle aromatic notes linger (lemon, stone)

**Marc Hébrart**

**With cellars in Mareuil-sur-Äy, this grower has parcels in six different villages. The standard is very high across the range, and the Champagnes are refined and very well-balanced.**

**Blanc de Blancs NV \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw-white gold

N- ultraclean, very subtle

P- poised & precise with exquisite equilibrium & tension ; very fine, very elegant – 100% Chardonnay, 38 months en tirage, 8.5 g/l dosage.

**“Cuvée de Réserve” Brut NV \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw with fine mousse

N- restrained, faintly sweet notes of apple with chalky note

P- wonderfully composed & balanced; this is very fine, ultraclean with beautifully-judged dosage – 80% Pinot Noir/20% Chardonnay, 26 months en tirage, 8 g/l dosage.

**“Brut Selection” NV \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with fine mousse

N- refined, restrained; very good intensity; sweet apple scent

P- soft, rounded; lovely fleshy center; very well balanced & easy to like – 65% Pinot Noir/35% Chardonnay, 38 months en tirage, 8.2 g/l dosage.

**Special Club 2006 \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with very fine mousse

N- very fine, delicately piquant; nuances of dried white fruits, apple

P- highly expressive with inviting buttery-stony highlights; long, finely-framed finish – 55% Pinot Noir/45% Chardonnay, 50 months en tirage, 7.2 g/l dosage.

**Rosé Brut NV \*\*\*\*+**

C- very pale salmon-pink with delicate mousse

N- understated richness; small red fruits, pepper note

P- wonderful presence & balance; textured, fleshy, generous rosé; beautiful acid frame (i.e., skillfully-judged dosage) – 53% Pinot Noir (7% still, barrel-aged)/47% Chardonnay, 26 months en tirage, 7.2 g/l dosage.

**René Geoffroy**

**Geoffroy's vines are mostly in Cumières, together with some Pinot Meunier in Fleury-la-Rivière. He uses Meunier to great effect to complete several of his cuvees. The Millésime 2002 is a marvel.**

**"Expression" Brut NV \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw with gold highlights

N- very attractive, nuanced, fragrant white fruits

P- very pure & beautifully composed marriage of the 3 varieties; very fine aromatic lift; delicate ripeness is revealed in the aftertaste with a racy acid backbone – 41% Pinot Noir/36% Pinot Meunier/23% Chardonnay, no malo, 24 months en tirage, 5 g/l dosage.

**"Empreinte" Brut 2006 \*\*\*(\*)**

C- pale straw-white gold

N- cool, restrained, very fine & subtle

P- cool, finely calibrated; has lift & elegance; a very understated Champagne that will no doubt gain dimension with further aging – 76% Pinot Noir/14% Chardonnay/10% Pinot Meunier, 54% goes through malo, 48 months en tirage, 4 g/l dosage.

**"Cuvée Volupté" 2006 \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale straw the very fine mousse

N- gorgeous, so very pure, clean & cool; cold cream & stone notes

P- dances across palate, gaining in expression & intensity; stunning length with very fine stone-pepper accents; very dry, precise, exciting finale – 80% Chardonnay/20% Pinot Noir (all from Cumières), no malo, 48 months en tirage, 2 g/l dosage.

**Millésime Extra Brut 2002 \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with very delicate bubbles

N- exciting, concentrated & multidimensional; dried apple, quince & other sweet white fruit highlights

P- great presence; expands through finish; very complex with fine accents of blanched nut, pepper; very elegant acid frame; a superb Extra Brut from an outstanding year – 60% Pinot Noir/35% Chardonnay/5% Pinot Meunier matured in used barriques, no malo, 2 g/l dosage.

**Rosé de Saignée Brut NV \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale salmon-coral with delicate mousse

N- delicate, pure, pronounced small red fruits (currant, strawberry, cherry); a very true & appealing rosé aroma

P- very lovely, liting; highly aromatic red fruit highlights; a charmer with wonderful fruit qualities – 100% Pinot Noir from saignée, 18 months en tirage, 10 g/l dosage.

**Other Non-Vintages Champagnes**

**Gaston Chiquet “Tradition” Brut \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw-light gold

N- fine, pure, good concentration; notes of cold butter, white peach

P- fine, precise & delicate; very attractive aromatic highlights which persist on the finish; fresh, very dry ending – 35% Chardonnay/45% Pinot Meunier/20% Pinot Noir, 3 years en tirage, 8 g/l dosage.

**Pol Roger “Pure” Brut Nature \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with yellow highlights

N- has depth & very slight post-autolytic notes

P- surprises with its richness & fullness; remarkably fat for this style of Champagne; dry but not severe ending; a highly successful example of the non-dosage offerings – one-third each Pinot Noir/Chardonnay/Pinot Meunier, 36 months en tirage, zero dosage

**Chartogne-Taillet “Cuvée Sainte-Anne” Brut \*\*\*\***

C- very pale white gold

N- sweet, lifted white fruits ; very clean, attractive

P- clean, light, charming; very subtle aromatic notes with very faint suggestion of Fino Sherry – 60% Chardonnay/40% Pinot Noir (80% 2007 vintage, 20% 2005 & 2006), 36 months en tirage, 4.5 g/l dosage.

**Nicolas Maillart Premier Cru Brut \*\*\*\***

C- very pale straw with tiny bubbles

N- very appealing, pure; so subtle yet hidden intensity

P- fresh, racy; peppery accent; long, fine, elegant & dry – 80% Pinot Noir/20% Chardonnay (20% reserve wines), 1/5 in barrel, 30 months en tirage, 7-8 g/l dosage.

**Henriot “Souverain” Brut \*\*\*+**

C- very pale gold

N- fine, lifted stone & white fruits

P- very delicate, elegant; rather light weight, but appealing finesse & fine-tuned dosage

**Bruno Paillard Brut \*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold

N- good expression; peppery white fruits

P- open, has charm; lasting flavors; a touch of dosage rounds it out; pleasing

**Pol Roger Brut \*\*\*+**

C- pale bright straw gold

N- appealing, fragrant, flowery & fruity (short time since disgorgement?)

P- delicious fruit qualities; soft, touch of sweetness at end; open, very enjoyable style

**Charles Heidsieck “Reserve” Brut \*\*\*\***

C- pale yellow gold

N- focused & fine; expressive toast, pepper, white fruit scent

P- accessible & flavorful; sweet underlying fruit & texture; long, expressive

**Gosset “Grande Réserve” Brut \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold

N- rich, deep nose with dried fruit, butter & pasty cream notes

P- ripe, round; has weight & flesh; flavorsome & persistent; finely balanced as well; a generous style of great quality for an NV – 43% Chardonnay/42% Pinot Noir/15% Pinot Meunier

**Bollinger “Special Cuvée” Brut \*\*\*\*(+)**

C- pale straw gold with tiny bead

N- rich, full, still fruity; very impressive, ample

P- this has good weight, presence & purity; attractive yellow fruit aromatics; long, precise, very dry; this lot can certainly be cellared, as is commonly the case with this Champagne – 60% Pinot Noir/25% Chardonnay/15% Pinot Meunier, reserve wines vinified in oak, 7-9 g/l dosage

**Louis Roederer “Brut Premier” \*\*\*\***

C- very pale white gold

N- notable concentration, aromatic interest ; complex reserve wine accents

P- has presence & class; subtle aromatic lift with faint yellow fruit scents; conservative dosage, elevated backbone

**Paul Goerg « Tradition » Premier Cru Brut \*\*\*\***

C- pale white gold with fine mousse

N- very inviting, rather ample ; creamy-chalky

P- beautifully composed; pure accents of sweet white fruits, cream, unsalted butter; wonderful equilibrium of flesh & spine; a complete non-vintage – 60% Chardonnay/40% Pinot Noir, 36 months en tirage, 9 g/l dosage using reserve wines

**Vilmart “Cuvée Grand Cellier” Brut \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale straw

N- very fine, very restrained ; pure tropical fruit notes, cream

P- so very fine, transparent; this seems ethereal; very pure; perfect equilibrium – 70% Chardonnay/30% Pinot Noir, fermented & aged in large oak casks, 24 months en tirage, 10 g/l dosage.

**Krug “Grande Cuvée” Brut \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with tiny bead

N- highly expressive, multi-faceted; complex sweet white & yellow fruits, butter pastry

P- great presence & class; impeccable balance & striking complexity; full of personality – rightly belongs with the top vintage cuvees – all 3 varieties, high proportion of grand cru, fermented in neutral barrel, up to 50% reserve wines.

### Other Blanc de Blancs

#### **Ayala Brut 2004 \*\*\*+**

C- pale very bright gold

N- this shows a bit of post-disgorgement age (mushroom note)

P- good poise & persistence; understated notes of evolution; there is good tension; I would drink this soon

#### **“Blanc de Millénaires” 1995 \*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold

N- high toned, biscuit & flinty

P- verging on lean, showing an evolved side ; very expressive, developed aromatics ; a Champagne to drink now

#### **“Mumm de Cramant” Brut NV \*\*\*+**

C- very pale straw-white gold

N- very fine, very focused stone fruits

P- compact & light weight; rather linear; dosage tempers very pronounced acidity; a Champagne that offers finesse rather than substance

#### **Alfred Gratien Brut Grand Cru NV \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale white gold

N- complex, fruit-inflected; expressive & intense

P- rich & full for a blanc de blancs; sweet fruit & pastry undertone; lasting finish; beautiful balance with a fine spinal column; this shows the superiority of its grand cru material – vinified in barrel, no malo

### Other Vintage

#### **Nicolas Maillart Premier Cru Brut 2005 \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with tiny stream

N- pure & fine with delicate sweet white fruit highlights

P- soft, ripe entry; pronounced white fruits overtones which persist in an inviting aftertaste; soft, elegant finale – 50% Pinot Noir/50% Chardonnay, 1/5 in barrel, 72 months en tirage, 5 g/l dosage.

#### **Nicolas Maillart Les Francs de Pied Brut 2005 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale straw gold with very fine mousse

N- very finely nuanced white & stone fruits

P- ripe fruits dominate; soft attack, then gains in expression; light plus; long, very fine finish with delicate point of acidity – Pinot Noir, all in barrel, no malo, 4 g/l dosage.

#### **Laherte “Prestige” Brut 2004 \*\*\*+**

C- pale white gold

N- focused autolytic notes, white fruits

P- subtle, stylish; lifted aromatics; firm, elegant backbone – rather compact, held back

**Laurent Perrier Millésimé Brut 2002 \*\*\*\***

C- pale straw gold with small bubble stream

N- understated, yet alluring richness with very good depth

P- rich, expansive; this has a sensual, mouth-coating quality; leaves a delicate honeyed sweetness; very fine aromatics with a suggestion of yellow fruits – 50% Chardonnay/50% Pinot Noir

**Bollinger “La Grande Année” Brut 2002 \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale gold

N- full, rich, spicy; this offers real depth & authority

P- full with a beautiful feel; layered; complex white fruits, pepper accent; high-class vintage that will gain with further cellaring – 60% Pinot Noir/40% Chardonnay from grands & 1ers crus, vinified in old barrels, min 60 months en tirage, 7-9 g/l dosage.

**Vilmart “Coeur de Cuvée” Brut 2002 \*\*\*\*\***

C- pale yellow gold with very fine mousse

N- lovely, rich, inviting & distinctive; toast, vanilla bean, menthol highlight

P- flavorful, expansive, vinous; nutty, toasted bread & secondary notes; very long; stands out in a crowd of its peers; persuasive example of the benefits of oak – 80% Chardonnay/20% Pinot Noir, fermented & 10 months in new barrique, 6 years en tirage, 8 g/l dosage.

**Gosset “Grand Millésime” Brut 2000 \*\*\*+**

C- pale dark gold

N- rich, buttery; oxidative undertone

P- open, well-developed; fleshy; finishes with toasted baguette, butter – 57% Chardonnay/43% Pinot Noir

**Pol Roger “Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill” 1999 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale yellow gold with tiny bead

N- deep, rich, concentrated; faintly biscuity; shows the added dimension of a long period on the yeast

P- ripe, open, rather soft as it enters the mouth; this is an accessible Churchill with definite substance, yet perhaps without the powerful follow-through of the greatest vintages - I would cellar this as it sure to fill out.

**Lanson “Noble Cuvée” Brut 1998 \*\*\*\***

C- pale yellow gold

N- forthcoming: toasty, spicy & buttery – signs of post-disgorgement aging

P- this has real interest; gains in expression; not a rich texture but complex, finely etched; most impressive for its long, nuanced finish

**Philipponnat “Le Clos des Goisses” Brut 1998 \*\*\*\*+**

C- pale yellow gold

N- well-developed bouquet marked by mushroom, white truffle

P- has style & complexity; medium full; complex aromatics of increasing maturity; very long, multifaceted finale; for my taste, I would drink this now- 70% Pinot Noir/30% Chardonnay, partial barrel aging, 4-5 g/l dosage.