

How to drink like a billionaire – a guide for the status-conscious wine lover

Wine writer Mark Oldman has a nice side line in encouraging a paying audience in Aspen, Colorado, to act like they are rich by tasting expensive wines



Wine writer and educator Mark Oldman pours Dom Perignon champagne for the famed French chef Jacques Pépin as the pair take a private jet to Aspen for the annual Food & Wine Classic. Photograph: Mark Oldman

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In Aspen, [Colorado](#), there is a saying: “The billionaires have moved out the millionaires.” Of the Forbes list of the world’s 400 richest people, 50 have homes in the verdant hills and valleys that surround the steep ski slopes.

With that dynamic in mind, wine educator, author and raconteur [Mark Oldman](#), renowned in world wine circles as a deft and unconventional presenter, deemed the [Food & Magazine Classic](#), an annual food and wine expo held in the swish ski resort town, the perfect venue for his seminar titled “Wines for IPO Billionaires”.

At 10am on Friday morning, over a hundred attendees queued up, patiently waiting for a coveted seat to hear Oldman riff on the drinking habits of the world’s wealthiest people. While it is unlikely that any actual billionaires are in attendance (few of the moneyed elite would deign to take direction in such a public forum on matters as important as wine) avid gourmets and oenophiles patiently waited with budding anticipation.



Mark Oldman with the expensive stuff. Photograph: Mark Oldman

As the crowd filtered in, there was a buzz in the room. Each guest took a seat behind a series of six unmarked wines, two white and four red.

After a few minutes, Oldman burst upon the stage, dressed in a rakish purple smoking jacket, with a wooden pipe hanging from his mouth. “If you went out and bought bottles of the wines that are in these glasses it would cost you at least \$2,000,” he said. “I would venture to guess that these may be the most expensive wines ever poured at a consumer tasting.” With that, the crowd sat up a little taller and stared at the bounty, and beauty, in the glasses before them.

Oldman began leading the assembled through a tasting of exceptional wines, beginning with the 2005 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs. “This wine is made from the best grapes in only the very best vintages,” he explained. “One hundred percent chardonnay in a Blanc de Blancs, no pinot noir, just pure Chard.” The crowd sipped their bubbles and nodded in approval. “When is the best time to drink champagne?” he asked the audience. “Always!” the audience shouted in response.

Next up was the 2005 Cos d’Estournel, a young bordeaux. “This is a Super Second,” he says as he briefly explains the Classification of 1855 pecking order. “What do you taste?” “Bong water!” screamed a man in the crowd. Oldman chuckled. “Only in Colorado,” he said in reference to the state’s recently relaxed cannabis regulations.

The tasting continued through epic wines from Italy, Australia and California's Napa Valley. As the vibe loosened further, thanks to the 7,900ft elevation, the early hour and the high-octane red wines, Oldman unsheathed a saber. "What's the best time for champagne?" he bellowed again. "Always!" his audience replied, and a massive three-litre bottle of **NV Champagne Barons de Rothschild Brut** appeared onstage.

Begin with bubbles and close with bubbles. That's how the billionaires do it.

The wines (as stated by the presenter)



The wines. Photograph: Mark Oldman

2005 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs, \$180/bottle: A defining Blanc de Blancs from a house that was founded in 1743

2005 Château Cos d'Estournel, \$360: Any self-respecting billionaire requires bordeaux in the cellar. This one is just coming of age

2011 Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia, \$180: Perhaps the most collectible of all the wines in Italy. A Tuscan gem

2012 Scarecrow Cabernet Sauvignon, \$3,000 (but \$5,400/bottle recently for special edition of same wine at a Napa [Wine Auction](#)): A Cult Cab with a capital C, this wine was sourced from a small two-acre plot that was planted to vine nearly 70 years ago. A collectible from one of California's finest vineyards

2006 Penfolds Grange, \$750: The most famous export from Oz and perhaps the tastiest wine of the flight

NV Champagne Barons de Rothschild Brut (in 3L): The bubbles in this beauty are big. And rich.