

SPIRITO di VINO

Culture and Quality for a Luxury Wine-Style

Asia

Rothschild Illustrious Family

CREATED
A CHAMPAGNE
ANIMATED
BY 250 YEARS OF
PASSION
FOR QUALITY
AND THE
ART OF LIVING

ITALY

*From North to South
with Chef Gianni*

WOMEN

*The "pink" side of
Chinese wine*

SAKE

*Stimulation of the
senses in Hiroshima*

CIGARS

*Hublot celebrates
Fuente Fuente Opus X*



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Above, the Rothschild's coat of arms displays the core principles that united and animated the family for more than 200 years. Opposite page, Philippe Sereys de Rothschild, owner of Château Mouton-Rothschild and Chairman of Champagne Barons de Rothschild says "The spirit animating the family in this project is that of total respect for the patrimony of Champagne."

Concordia Industria Integritas



by Jean Charles Viens photos by Stefano Scatà

The Rothschild family unites three
of its branches each representing an arrow in its
Coat of Arms to produce a Champagne



There is something awe-inspiring about the Rothschild family not only for its enduring wealth, power and global influence but also for its wide-ranging business interests today extending from real estate to banking, from winemaking to energy, and from art to non-profit organizations. The dynasty began with Mayer Amschel Rothschild in the middle of the 18th century. His five sons formed the first five branches represented today by the five arrows in the family coat of arms. More than 250 years and several generations later, three different branches of the Rothschild family joined forces in Champagne to combine their know-how and sense of innovation to accomplish the values of their motto: Concordia (harmony), Industria (diligence), Integritas (integrity).

Concordia. During a recent conversation, Philippe Sereys de Rothschild, owner of Château Mouton-Rothschild and Chairman of the Baron Philippe de Rothschild Group and the Champagne Barons de Rothschild, told me, “fam-

ily issues are always complex, and even though we are essentially competitors in our separate businesses, we decided from the beginning that every decision relating to the Champagne house had to be made unanimously and in harmony by all”. Since 1945, Philippe’s grand-father had participations in Champagne, first at Ruinart and then Henriot. But it is in 2003 that Benjamin de Rothschild, owner of Château Clarke, and head of the Edmond de Rothschild group, presented the idea to reunite three branches of the family for the cre-

ation of a new Champagne house. The challenge began in 2005, followed by commercialization in 2009. The spirit of the venture, which also includes Eric de Rothschild, owner of Château Lafite Rothschild, shows total respect of the patrimony of Champagne, joining the best terroirs with the know-how to accomplish the level of excellence they have always sought in their respective businesses.

Industria. Frédéric Mairesse, Managing Director of Champagne Bar-



Above, a fresco testifying of a long history. Top left, Maison Prieur. Right, wines are made with a majority Chardonnay and the red wine for Rosé is vinified in-house. Opposite page, the Côte des Blancs magnifies Chardonnay. In 2005, the Rothschilds joined forces with a few large family winegrowers from Vertus in the Côte des blancs to mutualize their technical and logistic equipment.







ons de Rothschild, is the only director to work for all three Rothschild family branches at the same time. With a deep knowledge of Champagne, he instinctively knew how to join their forces. During our visit, he told me “when you carry the name of Rothschild, you must target excellence.” It is in Vertus on the Côtes des Blancs that a cuverie and a cellar saw the light of day. Leaving nothing to chance, the Champagnes are crafted to the highest standards, strictly applied at each step of the vinification process. The key to this ambition is the decision to produce only small quantities sourced from carefully selected raw materials and to let time run its course over long periods.

“We arrived through the door of terroir”, Sereys de Rothschild said during my visit, “the growers around the area share our philosophy, which is key to our long-term approach”. Supply comes from 70 hectares, 80% in first and grands crus with a majority of Chardonnay from Le Mesnil sur Oger, Oger, Cramant, Avize and Vertus.

Pinot Noirs come mainly from Verzenay, Verzy, Ambonnay, Mareuil, Trépail and Ay. Mairesse then continued, “from the beginning the Côte des Blancs, which magnifies Chardonnay, imposed itself as evident. In 2005, the Rothschilds joined forces with a few large family winegrowers from Vertus in the Côte des blancs to mutualize their technical and logistic equipment and in 2007 it decided to invest in their own dedicated tools. They innovated by creating a winery with the most modern equipment in the region, including

small vats of between 30 and 60 hl, which allowing fermentation parcel by parcel for more precision in the final blend of the “cuvée” used for the second fermentation in the bottle.

Desiring to establish itself in the village of Vertus and employ twenty people in the immediate vicinity, the house purchased Maison Prieur in 2013. Talking about the future, Sereys de Rothschild stated, “eventually we will acquire more vines to add to those of a



Here above, capsules displaying the five arrows of the family crest, each representing the original branches of the family. Top left and opposite page, inside the house of Champagne Barons de Rothschild head-office in Reims: it is in the heart of the city in an 19th century dwelling. Top right, the newly released 2008 vintage matured 7 years on lees, in the respect of the house style.



small clos we own. But we are not in a hurry”, he continued, “time is on our side and we are especially patient.”

Integritas. Remaining modest and discreet, the Rothschilds quietly informed the other Champagne houses in advance of their venture. Mairesse told me, “from the outset; they were enthusiastic because the name of Rothschild carries prestige and they felt it would enhance the image of Champagne.” Sereys de Rothschild added, “the spirit animating the family in this project is that of total respect for the patrimony of Champagne, with no compromise on quality.” Their objective is to make a Grand Vin marked by the best Chardonnay. Distribution, which rests on the three branches of Rothschild, aims to be in the best and finest locations, and in the most beautiful hotels and restaurants around the world. Every detail is carefully considered to reflect a global vision of excellence. From the best grapes from the best crus, decisions taken throughout the whole

process are made to preserve the integrity of the product and to produce the greatest “cuvées”. Mairesse stated, “we are positioning ourselves in the world of luxury, producing very small volume.”

The end goals are to source better grapes, make better vineyard acquisitions, and to reinforce commitment to the region for the long-term. Perhaps the real strength of this partnership goes beyond terroir. Perhaps it comes from the strength of the family that has existed for centuries. United and animated for just over 250 years by a pas-

sion for enterprise, the family also stands for the primacy of quality and the art of living. At the end of our visit, Sereys de Rothschild said “we ask ourselves why we are doing this. Our answer is that we like to give pleasure to others. The technical part is necessary but it is not sufficient to realise one’s dreams”. In the end, when all has been said and done, wine is for pleasure, but for us that pleasure needs to be offered at the highest level we can aspire to! 🍷



Top Champagnes are matured over long periods. Bottom, the premier cru village of Vertus, in the Côte des Blancs where top quality Chardonnay comes from. Opposite page, each Champagne is elaborated with outmost respect to traditions. Champagne Barons de Rothschild (www.champagne-bdr.com) is imported in Hong Kong by Asc Fine Wines (www.asc-wines.com).

