

THE WORLD'S ONLY CHAMPAGNE MAGAZINE

NO. 13 £25 • €30 • US\$35 • CAN\$35 • AU\$35

Fine

CHAMPAGNE

100 Best Champagnes for 2019 • Champagne Hiking • Evolution of Luxury Champagnes • Jacques Selosse • Lamborghini Urus

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



100 Best Champagnes for 2019

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For nine years in a row FINE Champagne has produced the ranking of 100 Best Champagnes, we have crowned a glorious set of winners. In 2010 the title was given to Armand de Brignac Brut Gold NV, in 2011 to Piper-Heidsieck Rare 2002, in 2012 to Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 2000, in 2013 to Charles Heidsieck

Vintage 2000, in 2014 to Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé 2002 and in 2015 to Ruinart Dom Ruinart Rosé 2002. In 2016 we awarded Laurent-Perrier Grand Siècle, which was followed in 2017 by Moët & Chandon MCIH NV. This year, we are proud to announce that Dom Pérignon Rosé 2006 claims the title of 'Best Champagne'.



100

Best champagnes for 2019

Champagne comes in variable types from prestige cuvées to vintages and non-vintages. Its styles range from blanc de blancs to blanc de noirs, rosés, and alternating sweetness levels. In the following we will guide you to make the best picks for each of the types and styles.

Our aim with this annual ranking is to taste the entire offering on the international markets in order to select the champagnes that are showing best this very moment. The most important criterion is the quality of the wine and its accessibility today. In fact, we believe these to be the only characteristics that really matter to the consumer. Any champagne making it into the Top 100 in the rigorous tasting can warmly be recommended. After all, reaching an average blind tasting score of 89 points or higher is a fine achievement.

We assess the wines on the 100-point scale. We do not give points for future expectations, which is the reason most top champagne's points are likely to rise as it approaches maturity. As many age-worthy prestige cuvées are released young, they may not be able to show their true character at this early stage. These are the wines the consumer should forget in the cellar for a number of years and we often mention the wine's cellaring potential in the verbal evaluation.

Even though we encourage the producers to enter the most recent releases, any release that is still commercially available anywhere in the world can be considered, even if of limited availability. Contrary to many other wine rankings, this list of the 100 best champagnes is not based on a single tasting; instead, we wish to take into account all of the tastings that we had been privy to during the year. This gives us a comprehensive view of the quality and enjoyability

of the wines and allows us to eliminate the odd "bad" bottle from our ratings. For the shortlist we had chosen some 250 champagnes and carried out a blind tasting.

Results

Average score of the wines making it to the Top 100 list was 89.72 points. Competition for the top position was tight; wine one beat wine two by just 0.33 points. The deserving winner was Dom Pérignon's newly launched Rosé from 2006 vintage with average points of 95.

It's toughest competition were of impeccable breed: Piper-Heidsieck Rare 2002, Dom Ruinart Rosé 2004, Dom Pérignon 2008 and Louis Roederer Cristal 2009. As many as three 'Doms' in the Top 5! Curiously Piper-Heidsieck Rare 2002, that was our winning Champagne back in 2011, is going from strength to strength, finishing second now seven years after.

Prestige cuvées expectedly occupied the majority of the top spots, and made up around a third of the whole Top 100 list. The non-vintage wines took an approximate 45 per cent of the positions, with the first of them – Barons de Rothschild Brut NV – achieving laudable 12th position. The other top performers were Bollinger Rosé NV (18th), Piper-Heidsieck Brut NV (20th) and Lanson Extra Age NV (21st).

The vintage category is represented on this list by 22 wines, with Pol Roger Rosé 2008 (7th), Charles Heidsieck Vintage Rosé 2006 (9th), Piper-Heidsieck Vintage 2008 (11th) and Comtes de Dampierre Grand Vintage 2008 (13th) amongst the very best.

Our best grower champagne was Guy Charlemagne's single-vineyard Champagne Grand Cru Les Coulments 2012 (19th), followed closely

100 BEST Champagnes for 2019

11



92p Piper-Heidsieck Vintage 2008

Enticing, sweetly fruity and charred pastry, honey and vanilla nose with opulent toasty generosity. Rich, sweetly body which surprises with its lovely energy and nervosity. Its superb intensity promises great future potential.

When to drink: 2019–2035

Food pairing: Grilled scallops with lemon risotto

12



92p Barons de Rothschild Brut NV

Finely balanced whole of sweet coffee-toned white fruits, benefiting from some evolution. Polished texture of rounded, fleshy appeal. There is intensity, freshness and length. It all ends in perfect harmony.

When to drink: 2019–2023

Food pairing: Toast Skagen

13



92p Comtes de Dampierre Grand Vintage 2008

Soft and mild nose of supreme elegance. Stylish toasty and charred notes emerge to bring complexity to the brightly fruity whole. Intense, velvet-textured palate of exemplary length.

When to drink: 2019–2025

Food pairing: Pan-fried swordfish with grilled asparagus

14



91p Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 2007

Pristine green and yellow fruit on the vanilla-laden fruity, yet reserved and mineral nose. Highlighted acidity on the palate of leanness and feisty drive. Firm-structured and holding back, but already possesses the quaffing character.

When to drink: 2019–2030

Food pairing: Seafood platter

15



91p Palmer & Co Amazone de Palmer NV

There is plenty of yeasty and age-driven complexity on the nose of great depth. Spices, toast, cashew nuts and dried fruits. Mellow, concentrated palate with velour-like caressing finish of generous length.

When to drink: 2019–2025

Food pairing: Pan-fried sole with a tarragon and lemon

16



91p Montaudon Millésime 2011

The nose carries a fine toasty whiff over chalky notes and cool fruitiness. Fresh, intensely fruity, long and linear palate that finishes to a zingy end of brisk acidity. Stylish leanness and nervous energy.

When to drink: 2019–2023

Food pairing: White fish mousse canapes

17



91p De Castelnau Brut Millésime 2006

There are generous age-derived notes on the toasty, bready and nutty nose of a Burgundian undertone of spicy vinosity and red fruit. Chewy fruitiness on the round, profound palate that finishes with an elegant, cool note in the long, aftertaste.

When to drink: 2019–2025

Food pairing: Bread-crusted cod with remoulade and fries

18



91p Bollinger Rosé NV

Medium-deep peachy colour. There is cool restraint on the peachy nose of buttery pastry and sweet marmalade aromas. Finely balanced, smooth and creamy-textured, succulent palate with a suitably dry finish.

When to drink: 2019–2025

Food pairing: Salade Niçoise

19



91p Guy Charlemagne Grand Cru Les Coulmets 2012

Restrained and subtle on the first whiff but time in the glass and on the palate let it express so much more. Truly mineral style with textbook salinity. Light-weight yet intense palate with the finish revealing chalky-earthly tones and citric notion of acidity.

When to drink: 2019–2025

Food pairing: Moules Marinières



The Top 10s by style

Non-Vintage Blend

Non-vintage (NV, sans année) champagne is the backbone of every champagne house's production, typically accounting for 80–90 per cent of the total volume. Hence, it is also their most important product, taking up the most time and effort. Maintaining the consistent style and quality of the house's non-vintage champagne year after year is a challenge, yet it is paramount, because the very idea of non-vintage champagne is that no vintage-related variation can be detected in the taste – thus allowing the consumer to select his or her favourite cuvée with confidence. In the varying climatic conditions of the Champagne region, consistent quality is achieved by using reserve wines from previous years.

Moreover, non-vintage champagne must be ready to drink as soon as it has been released – the majority of champagnes

are consumed immediately after purchase. Therefore, non-vintage champagnes usually consist of all three grape varieties – which are sourced extensively throughout the region. The cellar masters of major champagne houses may blend more than four hundred base wines into their classic champagne in order to create a high volume of balanced, subtle champagne.

The minimum maturing time of non-vintage champagne after bottling is 15 months, but most prestigious champagne houses mature their non-vintage for 2–3 years or longer in order to achieve the autolytic, toasty aromas typical of champagne.

Overall placement

Non-Vintage Blend Top 10

1	(12)	Barons de Rothschild Brut NV
2	(20)	Piper-Heidsieck Brut NV
3	(21)	Lanson Extra Age NV
4	(29)	Louis Roederer Brut Premier NV
5	(30)	Gosset Grande Réserve NV
6	(33)	Palmer & Co Extra Réserve NV
7	(35)	Palmer & Co Brut Réserve NV
8	(37)	Duval-Leroy Extra Brut Prestige NV
9	(43)	Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve NV (base 2010)
10	(45)	G.H. Mumm RSRV Cuvée 4+5 NV (base 2010)

