



Champagne Club

FALL 2022



Welcome to the latest edition of the **Caveau Champagne Club** – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of some of the most fascinating sparkling wines on earth – Grower Champagnes.

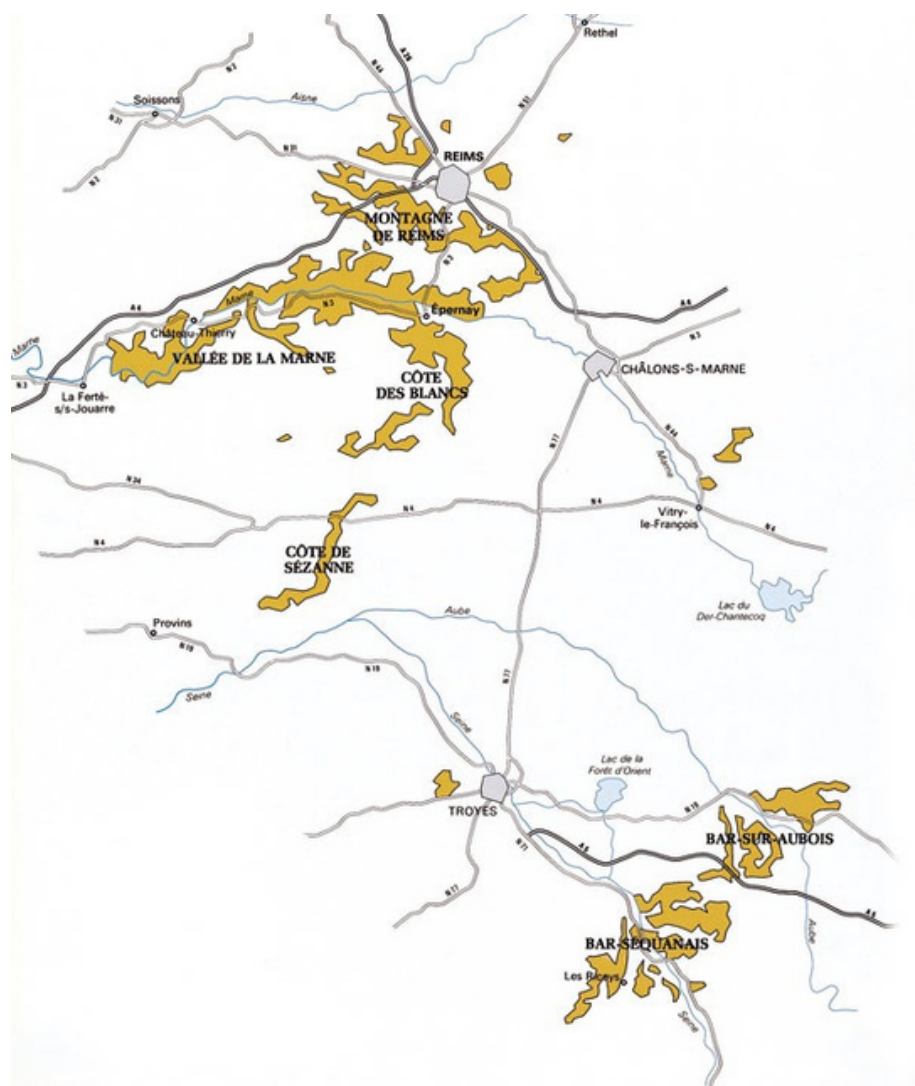
This club functions just like our **Burgundy Club** (and if you're not already a member, you can sign-up on the website). Also, check-out our new **"House Wine" Clubs** if you're interested in a regular supply of yummy Burgundy at around \$20-\$25 per bottle!

The wines in each 6-bottle shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Champagne seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines one by one.

This shipment is a study of the **Montagne de Reims** - the sprawling sub-region that is considered the "heart" of Champagne, and home to the lion's share of the Grand Cru villages. We'll be exploring six different wines from various corners of the Montagne - a great way to begin to see the complexities this vast terroir can produce.

If you're new to the Club, or would like to brush up on how Champagne is made and what all those words on the labels mean, you'll find our **Champagne 101 tutorial** on our website under **"Champagne Club"**.





Yes, Champagne is Wine. It's also a wine of PLACE.

For over 200 years we were fed the notion that Champagne was a wine of blending and winemaking, and that the provenance of the grapes mattered little. That's really amazing, if you think about - as there is clear evidence that as far back as the late 1600s they knew with great certainty that wines made from different villages in the Champagne region were significantly different, and that some were clearly better than others.

The Grower Champagne revolution of the last 25 years - and yes, it has indeed been a revolution - has brought to the forefront the undeniable fact that Champagne is, when at its best, a wine of terroir. The specific characteristics of the place where the grapes were grown is of the ultimate importance. A great wine still requires great winemaking and great viticulture, but the quality of the raw material, and the intrinsic qualities of the fruit derived from its place of origin are the very core of what the resulting wine is all about.

The increased availability of hand-crafted, place-specific and personality-driven wines - at prices that are a fraction of the mass-produced "Luxury Brands", is the other great thing that was brought about by the Grower revolution. We are fortunate to be living in the Golden Age of Champagne - the wines have never been better, the selection never wider, the prices never more accessible. Yay!



We import exclusively, and this club features, **Grower Champagne**. Grower Champagnes are simply wines produced 100% from vineyards that are owned by the producer. It may surprise you to learn that over 88% of Champagne is **Negociant Champagne** – meaning that the wines are made with grapes purchased from dozens to hundreds of different growers from throughout the region, and produced in huge factories.

The big names that you are likely familiar with – Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Mumm, Taittinger, etc. – those are negociants. They produce millions of cases of wine, in an industrial fashion, from fruit grown mostly not by themselves, but by thousands of smaller growers across the 319 villages that make up the Champagne viticultural region.

Grower Champagnes, on the other hand, are made by small, family producers, growing grapes and making wines exclusively from their own vineyards. This is analogous to the small, family estates of Burgundy. The typical Grower Champagne producer makes fewer than 5,000 cases per year (in fact less than a dozen make more than 6,000 cases). There are over 7,500 of these small grower-producers in Champagne, but only about 300 of them are available here in the U.S.



Grower Vs Negociant Champagne

Yes, I am passionately pro Grower Champagne - but only the good ones. Not all “Farmer Fizz” is good - the vast majority of it just isn’t. In fact the worst quality Champagne you’re likely to ever encounter is probably a lower-echelon Grower bottling - some of which are downright awful. Conversely, not all Negociant Champagne is bad - some of it is flat-out marvelous. **Krug, Salon, Bollinger, Roederer, Jacquesson** and many others are negocies who produce some of the finest wines on the planet. Clicquot, Moët, and many of the other “big names”, however, do not.

As production volume increases it just gets so much harder to maintain a level of quality. Equally as important - a larger production volume makes it more difficult to produce wines with personality or character, and nearly impossible to make a wine that speaks of a sense of place (especially when the grapes are coming from several hundred different places!) That’s why I love and applaud the top larger producers who are making gloriously delicious wines. At the end of the day - great, average, and poor producers come in all sizes. We specialize in the great smaller producers, who we think are making some of the most exciting wines to be found anywhere.



The Montagne de Reims

Referred to locally as simply "La Montagne" - it's covers a broad area that spans about 20 miles from east to west and 6 miles from north to south, forming a semi-circle to the south and west of the city of Reims (pronounced **rahnce**.) The vineyards can face any direction (as opposed to Burgundy, for example, where nearly all the vineyards face east or south-east.) The vines occupy a small portion of the entire area, which is mostly dotted with forests and thickets. The vines are most often on steep or rolling hillsides, where the soils are predominantly chalk-based, with varying degrees of clay, sand and marl mixed in.

The Montagne is reputed to be the best terroir in Champagne for Pinot Noir, and with good reason. Pinot reaches its apex in the Grand Cru villages of the Montagne - **Bouzy, Ambonnay and Verzy** produce the most prized Pinot Noir in all of Champagne. Pinot Noir accounts for 41% of plantings on the Montagne, with 34% Pinot Meunier and 25% Chardonnay making up the balance.

In all there are over 20,000 acres of vines on the Montagne across 97 different villages. Because of the sheer size of the area and the wildly different exposures, it's difficult to talk about the terroir of the Montagne as a whole. Certain sectors - the villages on the western edge known as the **"Petite Montagne"** are actually sweet-spots for Pinot Meunier. Vineyards on the east-facing slopes of the villages of **Villers-Marmery and Trépail** are planted predominantly to Chardonnay. The sector know as the **Massif de Saint-Thierry** is dominated by sandy soils, where Pinot Meunier performs very well.

There are big, powerful, Pinot Noir-based wines from the south-facing mountainous sections, and more elegant and expressive wines from the villages closer to the Marne river, and everything in between. In all, it's a great study in diversity and complexity - **so let's dive in and check out these lovely wines!**



Thierry Forget

1. **Forget-Chemin** - Marie Forget Extra-Brut - \$40

(For-zhay shah-mahn.) Forget-Chemin is a 4th-generation grower-producer, now under the watchful eye of winemaker **Thierry Forget**. They're based in the tiny 1er Cru village of **Ludes**, on the north facing slopes of the Montagne, but the domaine consists of 13ha (32 acres) of vines over 11 different villages in total. They've been members of Champagne's prestigious **Special Club** since 1973, and are a great example of how an old-school, traditional domaine can evolve into a cutting-edge new-wave producer.

Thierry has eliminated herbicides and pesticides and put the focus on meticulous viticulture. He has systematically reduced dosage levels across his lineup, and has continued the family tradition of keeping a vast library of older reserve wines, which often make up the majority of his non-vintage bottlings.

His "Marie Forget" cuvée, named for his daughter, is interestingly not sold in France. Thierry believes his French customers prefer a more classic, higher-dosage style.

They typically produce the Marie Forget cuvée with a dosage of 8 grams per liter. I asked Thierry if he would lower the dosage and make an Extra-Brut version for us - so the bottle you have is essentially custom-produced for Caveau Club members only! Here's the lowdown:

- One-third each Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Pinot Meunier
- From five different villages on the Montagne de Reims - **Mailly (grand Cru), Ludes, Chigny-les-Roses, Verzenay and Taissy** - all part of the "Grand Montagne" sector.
- It's from three different vintages - equal amounts of 2016, 2017 and 2018 in the blend.
- Disgorged in June 2021 with a dosage of **5 grams** per liter - EXTRA-BRUT

These are predominantly north-facing vineyards - very cool sites that are late to ripen, allowing for slow, intense ripening while keeping good freshness and acidity. I find this astonishingly complex and well-balanced. Very fresh, lively, elegant, focused on citrus and Granny Smith apple flavors. A refined and delightful drink!





Sophie Cossy

2. F. Cossy *Origine Extra-Brut* - \$46

Sophie Cossy (koh-SEE) took over the family estate when her father passed away unexpectedly - she was 26 years old, and thrust into a world that did not believe a woman was capable of running a domaine. She went on to prove everyone wrong, ultimately winning the award as Champagne's top winemaker and becoming a wine-lovers' favorite in over 20 countries around the world. We've been proud to work with Sophie for a dozen or so years now, and her wines remain the most popular in our portfolio year after year. (Sophie and I collaborate on the Caveau Extra-Brut bottling that we've been making since 2009 - watch for a new release coming in 2023!)

Sophie's estate is all in the **Petite Montagne** - the western side of the greater Montagne de Reims. She has a total of 7 ha (17 acres) spread across 34 parcels in six different villages (**Jouy-lès-Reims, Pargny-lès-Reims, Ville-Dommange, Courmas, Bouilly and Serzy-et-Prin**.) This is Pinot Meunier territory - the sandy soils mixed with streaks of chalk and clay bring out the best in the Meunier - lovely floral aromas and creamy, ethereal textures on the palate. Meunier accounts for about 50% of all plantings on the Petite Montagne, with Pinot Noir at 35% and Chardonnay at 15% rounding it out. This roughly mirrors the makeup of the Cossy estate as well. We have two of Sophie's wines for you in the package this time, showcasing the Petite Montagne terroir as well the beauty and complexity that multiple years of aging bring to the party.

Origine is a traditional blend of the three main Champagne grapes, and is given extended time on the lees to develop complexity and reveal secondary and tertiary aromas.

- 40% Pinot Meunier, 35% Pinot Noir, and 25% Chardonnay, all from the neighboring 1er Cru villages of Jouy-lès-Reims and Pargny-lès-Reims.
- Based on the 2014 harvest, with reserve wines from 2013 & 2012 (about 20%) in the blend.
- Aged over six years on the lees
- Disgorged in November 2021, dosage is 4 grams per liter

This is incredibly fresh while also being beautifully evolved - brimming with lemon-lime and subtle notes of white flowers. It lingers on the palate as some earthier notes start to emerge, and glides along on a very fine mousse to a fresh, ethereal finish. Absolutely splendid.

3. F. Cossy - l'Éphémère - \$46



l'Éphémère - French for "ephemeral" - is the newest addition to Sophie's lineup, but many years in the making. The idea was to take the concept of *Origine* another step further - giving the wine even more time in the cellar to evolve and and layers and layers of flavor and aromas.

- 50% Pinot Meunier, 30% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay
- 100% Premier Cru from Jouy and Pargny
- Based on the 2011 harvest, with reserve wines from 2010 and 2009
- Over 9 years on the lees
- Disgorged in April 2021, dosage is 6 grams per liter (Extra-Brut)

The longer the time in the bottle, the lighter the mousse (the natural carbonation) and the bubbles get smaller and smaller. The wine has a more elegant, refined feel in the mouth as a result. While there's still plenty of vibrant, primary fruit, the evolved flavors and aromas have started to dominate. This is a great illustration of the complexity that comes with bottle age in Champagne. This multi-layered gem is at its peak and ready to enjoy now.



Clotilde Chauvet

4. Marc Chauvet - Brut Séléction - \$41

The **Marc Chauvet** family (mahr show-VAY) has been growing grapes and making wine in the village of Rilly-la-Montagne since 1529 - their ancestors are buried under the church across the street from the winery. It's a brother & sister team in charge this generation - **Clotilde** makes the wines, **Nico** tends the vines, and together they're maintaining a house tradition that spans some 500 years.

Their 6ha (15 acre) estate is all in Rilly-la-Montagne, one of the prominent Premier Cru villages in the heart of the Grande Montagne (and just a mile or so down the road from Forget-Chemin in Ludes.) Their acreage is split between Pinot Noir and Chardonnay for the most part, with a couple of small parcels of Meunier to round it out.

The house style at Chauvet has always been to block the malolactic fermentation - so the wines retain the crisp-apple lactic acidity. As a result the dosage levels are typically a bit higher here, so as to take the edge off of the acid. These are full-bodied, intense, fruit-driven Champagnes, and we've got two great examples for you from the Chauvet cellars.

The Brut Séléction is one of my all-time favorite non-vintage Champagnes. Most NV bottlings are released very young - the rules require only 15 months of bottle ageing. Clotilde gives her Brut Séléction a minimum of three years on the lees, which makes a huge difference and lets the wine fully come into harmony.

- Typically a 50-50 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, this version leans about 60% Chardonnay and 40% PN
- Clo loved her Chardonnay in 2016, and her tasting trials confirmed that it should take the lead in this cuvée.
- It's 85% from the 2016 harvest, 15% reserve wines from 2015
- Aged for over four years on the lees
- Disgorged in May 2021, dosage was 9 grams per liter.

There's an awful lot going on here for a "simple" NV Brut! Full-throttle citrus fruit, laser-pure flavors, rich in the mid-palate, and a powerful, attention-getting finale. Just lovely. This has been a mainstay on my table at home for many years. Enjoy!



5. Marc Chauvet - Initiales 2013 - \$59

Chauvet was a long-time member of **Special Club** - but decided to leave the group after the 2008 vintage over philosophical differences (mostly over the labeling and packaging rules that were dictated by the Club, which recently have been mostly abandoned, btw.) At any rate, the cuvée they bottled as their Special Club offering has continued, produced since 2010 under the proprietary moniker "**Initiales**".

This is their flagship bottling, their wine to showcase the absolute best their vineyards and collective talents can produce. Its made only in exceptional years, and typically gets a minimum of seven years of aging prior to release.

A true top-of-the-line wine in every way - intensity, complexity, finesse, and length, and marked by beautiful aromas of white flowers and fruits, crisp apples and ripe white peaches on the palate, and a potent, non-stop finish that proclaims class and breeding.

- 70% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir
- 100% from the 2013 harvest
- Disgorged April 2021 - dosage 8 grams per liter.
- Only 450 cases produced



6. Laherte Frères - Les Longues Voyes 2018 - \$82

Anytime we can get wines from Laherte (pronounced lah-AIRT) into the club package, we're thrilled. When we can get one of their limited production, prestige bottlings in the club package, we're honored and humbled! Winemaker **Aurélien Laherte** is the 7th generation winemaker at his family's estate, and he's taken them to the pinnacle. Few grower-producers are so revered - by both the public and their peers.

Laherte farms 11ha (27 acres) comprised of over 80 small parcels in over a dozen villages, and makes a stunning range of 14 different Champagnes, each one uniquely showcasing something specific. They're all made with precision and immense skill, with quality and purity of terroir expression being the guiding goals for each wine.

Aurélien took over from his dad back in 2005, and has emerged as a true leader of the new generation in Champagne. The viticulture is organic and Biodynamic, vinification is mostly in used Burgundy barrels, dosages are kept to a bare minimum, and the wines are exquisitely beautiful.

Les Longues Voyes ("The long Rows") is a textbook example of a top-notch Montagne de Reims Pinot Noir-based Champagne.

- 100% Premier Cru Pinot Noir from the Montagne de Reims
- 100% from the 2018 harvest
- Vinified in used Burgundy barrels
- Malolactic fermentation was allowed to complete
- Disgorged in June 2021, dosage 4g/l

A very heady mix of ripe red and black fruits pops out of the glass, followed by a rich, mouth-filling texture on the mid-palate that reveals layers and layers of flavor. Hints of pear and spices and some floral notes start to emerge as well - this wine has a lot to say. It's rich and big-bodied, but also quite lively and refreshing - one of the more fascinating bottles we've had the pleasure to taste this year. Enjoy!



Thanks for joining us on our exploration of the great wines of Champagne! Watch your email for information on our next Caveau Champagne Club shipment coming in the spring, and for pre-arrival offerings on all the yummy Bubbly and Burgundies headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website: **www.CaveauSelections.com**

Launched in 2005, **Caveau Selections** is owned and operated by Martha & Scott Wright, winemakers in Oregon, Champagne and Burgundy since 1999. Scott has been drinking and studying the wines and regions of Burgundy and Champagne since the 1970s, visiting regularly since the 1980s, and now spends up to 6 months per year in France. Email **orders@caveauselections.com** for more information.



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