

WINE News

*Our latest scores for the flute—
from Champagne!*



OCTOBER 9, 2017 FEATURES

- 2 Interview: Julia Brugalières of Charles de Cazanove
- 3 Value and Class from Aspasia and Baron-Fuenté
- 4 Gems from Louis Brochet; Book from Peter Liem

Your Destination for Value Champagne

By Gary Westby

Champagne is a fully planted, closed appellation with the highest standards of any major wine region in the world written into law.

Everything from the yield of the vineyards to the amount of juice that can be extracted from a kilo of grapes and the minimum aging of the wines is tightly controlled. As such, Champagne can never be cheap. It can, however, be an exceptional value for the money when compared to what one could purchase from other top regions for the same amount.

In this newsletter, Scott Beckerley, Alex Schroeder, Diana Turk and I have focused on the best values we have from Champagne. Most of the wines featured in this newsletter are sourced directly from the producer, eliminating all of the import company and distributor mark-ups

associated with the big brands. These wines often have a higher export price than some of the big brands, but since we buy direct, the price on the shelf is far lower for you.

Below, I have recommended three exceptional Champagnes that you might not have tried, all under \$30. On page two, Alex talks to the queen of value Champagne, Julia Brugalières of Champagne Charles de Cazanove, about the excellent work this old house is doing. On page three, Scotty explains the virtues and values of old favorites Aspasia and Baron-Fuenté. On the back page, Diana tells the story of the incredibly high-quality and crazy low-priced Premier Crus of Louis Brochet. I hope you enjoy!

Christian Busin Brut Rosé Champagne

(\$24.99) We were pleased to sell this at \$40, but an incredible deal with this producer allowed us to reduce the price to \$24.99. It is composed of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay, mostly from the village of Verzenay, and it gets its rose color from old vine Verzenay rouge. This is full-bodied, rich pink Champagne that has a very elegant bead from over five years on the lees.



2010 Louise Brison Brut Champagne

(\$29.99) This precise, refreshing, elegant vintage Champagne is made the most expensive way possible. It is all estate and organically grown, barrel fermented and aged for five years on the lees. How does it get to be \$29.99? We buy direct from Delphine Brulez, one of our few growers who also has a diploma of oenology from Dijon. Her wines are perfect for an aperitif now or for cellaring!



Jean-Jacques Lamoureux “Réserve” Brut Champagne

(\$29.99) This pure Pinot Noir blanc de noirs comes from Les Riceys, just three short miles from the border with Burgundy. Vivien Lamoureux makes Champagne with the ideal blend of toasty richness and savory cherry fruit. This bottling is half reserves, so it not only has great brightness, but shocking depth for sub-\$30 Champagne. If you love Pinot Noir-based Champagne, don't miss it.



An Interview with Julia Brugalières of Charles de Cazanove

By Alex Schroeder

If you haven't noticed the great wines being offered by Champagne Charles de Cazanove, you are missing out on one of the best values in bubbles on the market right now. Charles de Cazanove is one of the largest family-owned operations in Champagne, and offers consumers high-quality, Pinot-dominant blends at great prices.

I spoke with Julia Brugalières, California brand manager for Charles de Cazanove, about the house, the wines, and how they can actually offer such great quality at affordable prices.

AS: Can you tell me a little about the house?

JB: Charles de Cazanove was created in 1811, and today it is owned by the Rapeneau family, who have been in Champagne for over 100 years and over five generations. They are very traditional and family oriented. The winemaker, Christophe Rapeneau, recently won the International Wine Challenge Winemaker of the Year Award in Sparkling Wines 2017. He is training his son, Paul, who is attending wine school in Reims after getting a degree in engineering. He will eventually take over for his father.

AS: How does Cazanove keep the prices so low?

JB: The Rapeneau family is one of the largest land-holding families in Champagne with nearly 35 hectares of vines for Charles de Cazanove only. They have great rates on long-term contracts with local families on nearly 250 more hectares of vines, so that 80% of the Champagne that Cazanove produces comes from low-cost, family-owned vines. This is how they are able to offer such great Champagne at affordable prices: they don't have to pay the premium on the high-quality fruit, and can pass the savings onto customers.

AS: What is the general house style of Cazanove?

JB: Cazanove Champagnes are Pinot Noir dominated, and display real structure and red-fruitedness, with great balance and acidity. Most of the fruit comes from the Montagne de Reims. When the house started in 1811, it was in Avize, on the Côtes de Blancs, but later moved to Reims because it was more central to the Champagne export industry. They own vineyards in both areas now.

AS: Cazanove is fairly new on the US market?

JB: We've only been exporting our Champagne to the United States for eight years now, even though it is the fourth-best-selling Champagne



Julia Brugalières tells the story of Champagne Charles de Cazanove.

brand back in France. At the moment, only about 20% is exported out of France to the rest of the world, the United States included. So it's definitely a growing market. I think we offer some of the best value for the price on the market in the US right now, so it will definitely grow.

AS: What can you tell me about the Cazanove line?

JB: The **Tête de Cuvée (\$26.99)** is made from 60% Pinot Noir, 30%

Pinot Meunier and 10% Chardonnay. Most of the fruit comes from vines on the Montagne de Reims, known for its great Pinot Noir. It's kept two years on the lees, and at \$26.99 offers a tremendous value with great structure and fruit from the Pinot Noir and a lively spark from the Pinot Meunier.

I think the **Premier Cru (\$34.99)** is the best value in the lineup. Cazanove owns seven Grand Cru vineyards around Champagne, and each of them, along with other Premier Cru fruit, goes into the Premier Cru cuvée, made from 50% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir and aged on the lees at least two years. The complexity and length are there—for only \$34.99.

The **Charles de Cazanove Rosé (\$34.99)** is made by blending in a portion of the still red wine called Coteaux Champenois into the wine, creating a round, red-fruited profile with great roundness of body and minerality.

The vintage **2006 Charles de Cazanove Brut (\$39.99)** is a delicious Pinot Noir-driven blend that is showing what just a bit of age can do for a vintage cuvée. It has flavors of red apples and a nice, nutty toastiness. It spent four years on the lees, and the richness is well balanced by acidity.

AS: What would be a great pairing for one of the Cazanove Champagnes?

JB: I love to have oysters and scallops with the Premier Cru, because of the higher Chardonnay content and the minerality that goes so well with seafood. It also has a round texture and great acidity that goes so well with rich scallops.

Many thanks to Julia for taking the time to be interviewed and for presenting the Cazanove line at this year's Champagne staff summit.



Aspasie and Baron-Fuenté: Small Estate Value and Class

By Scott Beckerley

Champagne Aspasie

The very first time I visited the Champagne region, almost exactly 10 years ago, my first stop, straight from CDG airport in Paris, was the winery, home and guest house of Champagne Aspasie, known at that time as Champagne Ariston.

I was super excited to finally visit the region and this made for the perfect first stop. I was literally like a kid in a candy store and on that day, I fell in love with all of their wines, especially their non-vintage



Paul Vincent Ariston in a new plot in Brouillet.

Aspasie Brut Rosé (\$34.99)—we had it that night with a chocolate tort—and their **Aspasie Cepages d’Antan (\$99.00)**, which we had with paella that Caroline had cooked in a massive fireplace. The rosé is still the same, a 50/50 blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier with 12% of the Meunier vinified as red wine, and lively with minerality and brightness beneath its dark cherry fruit. The Cepages d’Antan was my first-ever taste of the “ancient” varieties of the region: Pinot Blanc, Petit Meslier and Arbanne. It still has that intriguing nose of pine nuts, lychee and white flowers. It fleshes out on the palate, with brioche and white and yellow fruits, and a completely amazing finish of minerals, chalk and citrus. I cannot think of any food this would not work with and it still remains one of my favorite Champagnes in our collection—and is moderately priced for this quality.

The **Aspasie “Carte Blanche” Brut Champagne (\$27.99)** is a perennial best-seller with a toasty, yeasty quality and the ever-present Aspasie minerality on the finish. Don’t forget the lush **Aspasie Blanc de Blancs Brut Champagne (\$34.99)** with its lemon curd and cream character, or the **Aspasie “Prestige Vieilles Vignes” Champagne (\$39.99)**, which has only got better over the years. The Prestige is bouncy and bright, a typical 2008, which this one is, as well as deep and complex from the 25% Pinot Meunier (the remaining blend is 50% Chardonnay and 25% Pinot Noir).

Lastly, there is the superb **Aspasie “Brut de Fut” Champagne (\$59.99)**, which is the same blend as the “Prestige” and 100% from the 2002 vintage, to boot—so rich and dense with just the right amount of oak—and also the **2010 Aspasie Brut Champagne (\$39.99)**, with its full body and dried fruit character.



Baron-Fuenté

Our only small-estate negociant is Baron-Fuenté. This house represents some of the best values in Champagne that we have ever seen, and quality control is super tight. Their own staff harvests the grapes and they only purchase fruit from vineyards that they have worked with for many, many years.

The benchmark for this house is the **Baron-Fuenté “Grande Réserve” Brut Champagne (750ml \$23.99; 1.5L \$49.99)**, a pleasure of a wine with elderflower, pastry dough, ginger and lemons on the finish. I mean, c’mon, a magnum of this at \$50? Unbelievable!

Another great value is the **Baron-Fuenté 2008 “Grand Millesime” Brut Champagne (\$29.99)**, with its apricot fruit and brioche notes and a great, chalky finish. A 2008 vintage at this price and quality is also just unbelievable!

The **Baron-Fuenté “Esprit” Blanc de Blancs Brut Champagne (\$39.99)** was recently featured in our Champagne Club and is creamy and soft, with a nicely toasted hazelnut background. **92 WE**



Sophie Baron of Champagne Baron-Fuenté.

Another addition to the line is the **Baron-Fuenté “Esprit” Brut Champagne (\$34.99)**, which is very San Francisco with its toasted sourdough nose, lemon meringue, pastry dough and ripe fruit. Nice, balancing acidity on the finish. **91 WE**

The **Baron-Fuenté “Galipettes” Brut Champagne (\$34.99)** adds a savory and toasty character to the bunch with butter, bread dough and cocoa flavors. Again, the charming acidity peaks on the finish and adds a nice bit of cleanliness to the overall character. **92 WE**

But my personal favorite is the **Baron-Fuenté “Cepages Meunier” Brut Champagne (\$44.99)**, all baked apples and figs and gamey goodness! This is *the* true bubbly of the fall season—I just hope there is some left for us to sell to you by the time this article is published!



The Estate-Grown Gems of Louis Brochet

By Diana Turk

Not many of our Direct Import wines are discovered in the back of a cab, but that's how it happened with new favorite Louis Brochet. The story goes that our buyer, Gary Westby, was told by a customer who had been touring Champagne that his entrepreneurial driver mentioned his friend was a récoltant-manipulant with some quality wines. Although skeptical, the next time he was in the region, Gary agreed to meet with this friend of the cab driver of the customer. He turned out to be Louis Brochet, a fourth-generation winemaker with a diploma of oenology from the University of Reims and a treasure trove of classic vintages.

While all of Brochet's wines impress, my favorite is probably the complex **Louis Brochet 1er Cru Brut Champagne (\$29.99)**, composed of 75% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay and 5% Pinot Meunier, with over 50% reserve wines. The cépage reflects the planting of the family's 32-acre vineyard in Écueil, and the larger percentage of Pinot Noir makes this release especially aromatic. Showing beeswax on the nose with apple fruit through the palate and a creamy mouthfeel, the elegant Brut opens up to reveal earthier umami flavors. It's sumptuous but finishes refreshingly dry and subtly herbal. Aged over two years on the lees and only recently disgorged, it's cellared for as long as the house's two oenologists deem optimal. The quality for the money here is remarkable.

Louis Brochet 1er Cru Extra Brut Champagne (\$29.99) is a crisper option, singing with lemon and bright white floral notes (the winemakers specify acacia). Nimble acidity is balanced by a richer, elegant mouthfeel and a tiny bead typically only seen in Champagne twice this price. Citrusy up front, with a distinct red berry hit from its two-thirds Pinot Noir, this steely wine is surprisingly toasty through the palate, and feels rounder than the five grams per liter dosage implies. A sure bet for seafood, the food-friendly Extra Brut has plenty of lift and razor focus, and makes even weeknight takeout feel luxurious.

An independent grower-producer with both technical expertise and passion, Louis Brochet makes wines with precision and finesse. His lineup is a killer value and a welcome spark in our Champagne section. Add yourself to the waiting list now for the expressive higher-end cuvées. They are extremely limited and worth purchasing sight unseen.



San Francisco Store Event with Peter Liem and Louis Roederer

By Gary Westby

This Thursday, October 12 at 5pm in our San Francisco store, we host Peter Liem for the release of the long-awaited book, **Champagne: The Essential Guide to the Wines, Producers, and Terroirs of the Iconic Region (\$59.99)**. We will



be hosting this event in concert with Champagne Louis Roederer. The author will be there to sign books and maybe even join me in a discussion about the wines. The tasting will be \$10, but we will discount the book to \$49.99 if you want to taste. (Sorry, we can't offer the discount if you don't want to taste or can't make it to San Francisco!)

This book includes beautiful renditions of the famous Larimat maps of the Champagne region in a gorgeous box set package. It took me ten years of searching to get my original set, and if you are interested in a preview, you can see the story of them on our blog, **Uncorked**. These represent the best cartography of the Champagne region, and the book is worth the price for them alone. Peter Liem is the only English-language journalist who lives in the region and reports on the wines with in-depth research, not just strings of adjectives. We will be tasting the best-in-class **Louis Roederer "Brut Premier" Champagne (\$39.99)** that wowed us at our latest staff Champagne summit with a combination of chiseled minerality and layered richness, and the just-released **2009 Louis Roederer Brut Champagne (\$64.99)** which comes from the original estate of Roederer in Verzenay and Avize, along with a couple of others.

K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061
P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6
LOCKERS Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637
Email: Wines@KLWines.com

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028
P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853
HOURS Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to KLWines.com/Local-Events.

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6
LOCKERS Mon-Fri 10-6:30, Sat 9-5:30, Sun 11-5:30

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit KLWines.com

FOLLOW OUR BLOGS UNCORKED AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L STAFF