

# TEN OF THE BEST CHAMPAGNES

The top of the pile in Champagne is broadening. However, it is spearheaded by wines from proven brands which we have trusted for years: Jacquesson, Gosset, Deutz and Pol Roger. They've now been joined at the top by Charles Heidsieck, whose new owner still has plenty up his sleeve, and two top-level small wineries, Veuve Fourny and de Sousa, which astonished us with a new premium cuvée.



**1 Champagne Charles Heidsieck  
Blanc des Millénaires 1995  
20 points | 2016 to 2017**

We very rarely award top marks. We have known and been tasting this exceptional wine for several years, and every time thought its decline would have to begin soon. Not in the slightest! An illustration of absolute elegance and perfect ripeness.

**2 Champagne Gosset  
Celebris 2002  
20 points | 2015 bis 2030**

We tasted this wine repeatedly and in various circumstances, but failed to find any errors, only further qualities: this is a resounding success, the perfect combination of wine and sparkle, power and elegance.

**3 Champagne Jacquesson  
Dizy Corne Bautray 2005  
19 points | 2016 to 2017**

There are very few 2005s which we really like. However, once again Jacquesson has done things rather differently, and given us this stunning wine with its flawless expression of Pinot. For current and budding connoisseurs.

**4 Champagne Deutz  
Amour de Deutz 2006  
19 points | 2015 to 2017**

Deutz is Amour, Amour is Deutz, and the 2006 vintage particularly suits the incomparably delicate, airy style of this wine. One of the most beautiful, tempting, elegant, transcendent wines on the market.

**5 Champagne Deutz**  
**William Deutz 2006**  
**19 points | 2015 to 2018**

Amour's counterpart is William: intense, fruity, down to earth, tart, spirited yet incomparably elegant. This magnificent wine is proof that you can appreciate both blond and brunette, finesse and power.

**6 Champagne Veuve Fourny**  
**Clos du Faubourg Notre Dame**  
**Premier Cru 2005**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2018**

We only have one criticism to level at the Fourny brothers: they are too small to pass as a "big brand". Their greatness instead lies in their wines, in particular this stunning single-site wine, one of the very best champagnes available.



**7 Champagne Jacquesson**  
**Aÿ Vauzelle Terme 2005**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2017**

The weightier version of the two top single-site wines from this small yet perfectly formed Dizy brand, even more vinous, Burgundian and intense, one of the best sparkling wines from this complicated vintage.

**8 Champagne Taittinger**  
**Comtes de Champagne 2006**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2018**

Style is everything in champagne, and this Comtes is so perfectly true to its own style that we can but cheer: not just at its perfect illustration of elegance and airiness, but also at this vintage, which has long been underestimated.

**9 Champagne de Sousa**  
**Mycorhize Extra Brut Grand Cru**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2017**

The discovery of the tasting – and what a discovery! Never before has this small winery astonished us with such outstanding wines, and this cuvée with its wonderfully delicate oak notes and stunning minerality is the icing on the cake.

**10 Champagne Pol Roger**  
**Sir Winston Churchill 2004**  
**18.5 points | 2016 to 2019**

One of our favourites from the tasting, not only perfectly developed and perfectly mature, but also immensely stylishly made, ideal now: currently the best example from this vintage, whose wines need to be drunk up soon.



# BRAND OF THE YEAR: CHAMPAGNE CHARLES HEIDSIECK, REIMS

In every annual champagne special we choose our brand of the year, awarded to a house which has made a particularly positive impression. This year, producers such as Jacquesson, Deutz or Gosset are followed by Charles Heidsieck, an old brand with new dynamism.

**T**he Heidsiecks, who once upon a time immigrated to Champagne from Westphalia to trade cloth and wine, have written sparkling wine history. Florenz-Ludwig made waves in 1811 when he overtook Napoleon's troops on his Russian campaign with a couple of crates of champagne in his luggage ready to celebrate a possible victory, and Charles Heidsieck (1822 to 1871) became "Champagne Charlie" after conquering the American market with his brand founded in 1851. During the American Civil War, he was arrested on suspicion of espionage and was only released when Abraham Lincoln interceded.

This old top-quality brand has remained untouched by the process of concentration occurring among major champagne houses. Since 2011 it has been owned by the Descours family of French entrepreneurs, together with its sister brand Piper Heidsieck, in whose cellars the wine is created. They have big plans for this always exceptionally high-quality brand, which nevertheless remains well-known only to insiders. The exceptional brut has gained a new outfit with a bottle shape reminiscent of one of the "crayères", or chalk cellars, owned by the house in Reims; it has improved distribution and thus availability, and is striving for excellence. Charles Heidsieck should become for Piper what Dom Pérignon is for Moët & Chandon or Dom Ruinart for Ruinart: the absolute best.

Its actual flagship wine, made in small quantities of only around 200,000 bottles per year and left to age for an above-average period of time, is the Blanc de Millénaires 1995. We were almost equally impressed by the brut, a true creation from experienced cellar master Cyril Brun, blended from 60 crus with a (high) 40% proportion of reserve wines (the oldest of which has more than ten years of cellar aging under its belt), matured for at least three years in chalk cellars. The recipe is reminiscent of Krug and is also very similar in taste! Charles Heidsieck is and remains top-level, something it has recently started wanting to make known.



Heidsieck staff with old bottles from the ancient cellar: all of the house's champagnes are left to age for longer than average.

## THE TOP HOUSES OF THE YEAR

The classification system in Champagne relates officially to villages and sites rather than wines or brands. For this reason, every year we produce our own (of course terribly serious) classification of the best producers, based on current and past tasting notes. Here is 2015's version:

**Première Grande Marque** Deutz, Gosset, Krug, Jacquesson

**Deuxième Grande Marque** Charles Heidsieck, Pol Roger, Dom Pérignon

**Troisième Grande Marque** Billecart-Salmon, Bollinger, Dom Ruinart, Louis Roederer, Taittinger

**Top Small Wineries of the Year** Veuve Fourny, de Sousa

**Top Cooperatives of the Year** Mailly Grand Cru, de Saint Gall

**Discovery of the year** Champagne Dom Caudron

(Passy-Grigny winemaking cooperative, Marne valley)