

THE WORLD OF FINE WINE



ISSUE 58 2017 / BEYOND LIKING: BARRY SMITH ON THE TRUE TASTE OF A WINE
2014 BURGUNDY / CHAMPAGNE / CALIFORNIA RHÔNE / ANJOU / TAWNY PORT

CONTENTS

Issue 58 2017



Features

114 FACE TO FACE AXEL HEINZ: FROM EFFORT TO EFFORTLESS

Margaret Rand meets the articulate Franco-German winemaker who—after arriving in Tuscany without speaking Italian, and with his new employers in a moment of transition—has helped Ornellaia fulfill its enormous potential in Italy’s “Bordeaux-on-Sea.”

118 BURGUNDY PORTRAIT THIERRY BROUIN

Jon Wyand meets and photographs the “gentleman” winemaker in the cellars of Domaine des Lambrays in Morey-St-Denis.

120 CHAMPAGNE SOLERAS AND PERPETUAL RESERVES THE TIMELESS ESSENCES OF PLACE AND STYLE

Whereas the use of reserve wines was once largely a matter of ensuring consistency across vintages in Champagne, today a number of

producers are exploring the ability of *réserve perpétuelle* or *solera* to better express house style or terroir, explains Anne Krebhiel MW.

128 ANJOU'S PERMANENT WINE REVOLUTION

For the past 30 years, Anjou has been one of France’s most dynamic wine regions, with Chenin Blanc—sweet and dry—the ever-evolving focus. Jacqueline Friedrich sets the exciting scene in the Loire and profiles four of her favorite producers.

138 BEYOND LIKING

Philosopher and wine lover Barry Smith has long argued against the view of wine tasting as a subjective experience, making the case for the existence of objective flavor properties and against the idea of flavor residing in the minds of individual tasters. In an important essay, he takes his ideas further, asking why there is such resistance to objectivity about flavor and if there are any convincing arguments against it.

150 VIRTUAL SIGNS NEW HORIZONS: VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN SOMMELIERS

Eschewing meat and/or dairy need not be an impediment to forging a successful career as a sommelier, says Gemma Price. Indeed, the popularity of meat-free dining may influence in positive ways how all of us eat out.

156 BORDEAUX PORTRAIT CHÂTEAU MALARTIC LAGRIVIÈRE

Adam Lechmere joins Jean-Jacques and Michele Bonnie as they celebrate 20 years of ownership of the Pessac-Léognan estate, delving into its past and tasting a dozen red and white wines, including the now very scarce 1961.

162 ON THE VINE FERRARI: PIONEERS AND PERFECTIONISTS AMONG THE PEAKS

Michael Edwards meets the latest generation of Lunellis, the family behind Italy’s most famous sparkling-wine brand from Trento.

CONTENTS

Issue 58 2017



Tastings

18 HUGH JOHNSON'S COUPS DE COEUR AFFECTING THE WHOLE ME

Notes on bottles that have touched his heart.

168 ONE BOTTLE PRODUTTORI DEL BARBARESCO 2013 BARBARESCO: THE STORY OF A VILLAGE

Andrew Jefford reflects on a single interesting bottle.

171 TASTINGS

The distinctive *World of Fine Wine* tasting philosophy and protocol for both blind and open tastings, and the members of the permanent panel.

174 SAVOR 2006 V 2007 CHAMPAGNE: BEST OF AN AVERAGE BUNCH?

Tom Stevenson introduces a tasting shared with Essi Avellan MW and Alex Hunt MW in

which they compared two consecutive vintages where most Champagne producers chose to declare either one or the other.

182 DÉJÀ BU 2013 BORDEAUX: HIGHLY VARIABLE BUT AT BEST FRESH, FRAGRANT, TENDER

A second tasting of a difficult vintage confirmed the en primeur verdict of variable quality and a need for careful selection when buying, says Michael Schuster, who was joined by Andrew Jefford and Stephen Brook.

198 DÉJÀ BU 2014 BURGUNDY: BALANCED AND FRESHLY RIPE

Jasper Morris MW introduces another challenging but ultimately successful year, the most consistently fine vintage for whites for decades, but one that also gave fresh, fruity reds, especially from the Côte de Nuits. With Neil Beckett, Neal Martin, and Roy Richards.

214 SAVOR CALIFORNIA RHÔNE: A LIFE OF ITS OWN

Peter Liem introduces a tasting shared with Andrew Jefford and Alex Hunt MW that showed just how far Rhône varieties—red and white, varietals and blends—have come in the Golden State over the past 30 years.

224 SAVOR AGE-DATED TAWNY PORT: IN ANOTHER DIMENSION

Richard Mayson is joined by Andrew Jefford and Jesús Barquín for a “magnificent” tasting of 10, 20, 30, and 40 Year Old Tawny Ports, a category in which care and craftsmanship can create transcendent wines.

PREVIEW





A new classic for our age: Beauty and distilled wisdom

Champagne: The Future Uncorked Gert Crum

Published by digipublishers
\$99 / £75 / €85; iBook €29.99 and equivalents

REVIEWED BY
MICHAEL EDWARDS

Experience and memory really do count for something where aromas and flavors are concerned. These attributes have particular force in Champagne, for the wines are never that easy to judge categorically. The bubbles affect our perception of the aroma and flavor profiles, which can change like quicksilver ten minutes after the cork is popped. Moreover, in observing the trajectory of lees-aging and the wine's post-disgorgement "second life," when you think a Champagne, particularly Vintage, is going to turn right, ruefully it often turns left. Happily, Gert Crum, the distinguished Dutch wine writer, shows in this major new work how eminently qualified he is to be our reassuring companion and mentor in explaining the intricacies of what is, at its best, the world's greatest sparkling wine.

Now 68, Gert has spent many years delving into and exploring all parts of *Champagne Viticole*. So, naturally he feels a bond with the region and the perfectionist people who make the wines that matter. Yet he never loses his critical faculty to sort the great from the passable and even, to put it plainly, the indifferent or poor, dressed in gaudy clothes. For the author, the motto of his book is very simple: "With Champagne, it is not a question of luxury but of taste. Until recently, the life of a Champagne enthusiast was easier, deciding whether, say, to go for the Brut Impérial of Moët or the Carte Jaune of Clicquot: two very different Champagnes, but at least an easy overview." Ever young at heart, with a sleepless curiosity about the new, Gert

considers that nowadays the Champagne scene is considerably wider, more layered, more mobile, and more exciting. Harder to fathom, perhaps, but all the more fascinating. Who could disagree?

A fountain of insights

This opus is easily the most complete of the five that the author has now written about Champagne since his first in 1995. I was expecting something pretty good, but this is much more—a new classic for our age, distilling the wisdom of constant travel *sur place*, crafting meticulous reportage, especially of key producers and their wines as they are now, but also with excellent recall of what they were like 20 years ago. It is a fountain of insights (to borrow Howard Goldberg's phrase) for the professional trade, sommeliers, and of course Champagne lovers wanting to know more. It's available as a handsome 496-page hardback but also as an interactive iBook, with beautiful photographs by Jan Bartelsman, evocative illustrations by Cees Nouwens, and detailed maps of the vineyards by Laurent Marty.

The work melds a careful, accurate history of the vast medieval Province of Champagne, with a comprehensive account of Champagne-making today, including a better contemporary understanding of the major grape varieties, particularly Meunier; this, the second most planted grape variety in Champagne, is now seen less as related to Pinot Noir, more as a bridge between Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. When well made, Meunier shows a freshness of fruit and florality in certain crus—especially Ludes, Chavot, Pierry, Festigny, and Leuvrigny—and also reveals a surprising aptitude to age quite well, belying the variety's blanket reputation as an earthy, early-ripening palate-filler.

Gert writes very well in a sprightly, accessible style, his prose a nice blend of the scholarly and the conversational, plus a dose of very Dutch common sense. It reads like the best sort of candid letter to a cherished friend.

Challenging and inspiring times

One of the most arresting sections of the book is titled “A Change in the Wind” and deserves close reading for the dynamism that is now rejuvenating top maisons and domaines. It’s vintage Crum, trenchant yet ironically nuanced: “Champagne was once the drink of the Tsars, but now it is the drink of the stars of every type, in every walk of life. It seems that it is all about the bubbles, and because of this, Champagne is linked in people’s minds to frivolity, indulgence and decadence. The consequence of all this is that many consumers, even many connoisseurs, do not see Champagne as wine, never mind a great classic wine.” Yet, for sure, the winds of change are coming. The big houses are starting to talk less about bubbles and more about the unique character of the historic, chalk-based wine from the Marne heartland. Gert stresses that the houses need to do this “because on the one hand the quality of Champagne has never been higher; on the other, Champagne has never been in greater danger than it is today, because other regions and countries have been making great strides in making sparkling wine.” Certainly, from Mendocino County to Marlborough, from Tasmania to Trento, there are now excellent, fine-drawn traditional-method sparkling wines.

The most watchful and resilient Champenois know this. Certainly, taking a fresh look at the region, Champagne seems to be reshaping itself in a new era of true character and diversity—all of a piece with the individuality of the French, a nation that still produces more than 200 cheeses. The author reminds us that this renewal is a serious and qualitative by-product of the rise of smaller artisanal Champagne producers, including both bijou houses and grower-winemakers. Often using organic practices, they want to give a sense of place to their locale in monocru and single-vineyard Champagnes. Gert certainly does full justice to the best of these who tap into a niche market from New York to Tokyo by way of Milan, giving a visual presence out of all proportion to their very small share of Champagne’s export market. Window-shop down Manhattan’s Fifth Avenue, and you are as likely to see a magnum of

From top: Benoît Marguet, Titan, and Urban; Emmanuel Brochet on his reborn domaine; Roederer’s reserves.



Illustrations by Cees Nouwens; photography by Jan Barteisman, all from Gert Crum, *Champagne: The Future Uncorked*



Selosse or Jacquesson as a flagon of Dom Pérignon or La Grande Dame. The time of the little guys and girls has come, even if some of us are uneasy about the term “terroir Champagnes” being applied exclusively to them. Families of the

Top: The Marne Valley near the village of Cumières.
Bottom: Vincent Laval; Vincent and Raphaël Béréche.



greatest houses, like the Roederers and the Billecarts, have been working with the finest terroirs for close to 200 years. And as riveting as some single-vineyard wines can be (Krug’s Clos du Mesnil and Fourny’s Clos du Faubourg Notre Dame are inspiring), Champagne at heart, at every level, depends on blending, the art of *assemblage*, for extra complexity.

The most satisfying part of Crum’s book is the masterly choice of his top 80 Champagne producers—an arbitrary selection, sure, but one showing exemplary judgment and discernment, placing each in its history and context, enhanced by a host of balanced and evocative tasting notes, evaluated by stars, not points. There’s no attempt to drive a wedge between the best *négoces* and the domaines. The chosen in both camps come across as members of an extended family with shared standards and warm respect. As Gert asks rather impishly, can it be such a surprise that Anselme Selosse, the icon for so many growers over the past 25 years, is a good friend of Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, the maestro of Roederer and the most intelligent exponent of biodynamic methods? It’s good to see among the profiled producers Didier Doué, the other great grower in Montgueux, and Nathalie Falmet, in the far south. Gert has always been an indefatigable traveler, who does not only his homework but the equally necessary legwork as well. Bravo!