

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

John Gilman

Annual Champagne Review 2013

2007 Pierre Brigandat “Dentelles et Crinolines” Extra Brut Millésime (Channes)

The 2007 Pierre Brigandat “Dentelles et Crinolines” Extra Brut Millésime is a lovely example of the vintage, with depth, structure and good focus and balance. I could not find any information on the cépages or aging regimen on the internet. The bouquet is a deep and complex blend of peach, apple, warm biscuits, almonds, a fine base of soil and just a touch of barrel fermentation in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with superb focus and grip, plenty of mid-palate concentration, elegant mousse and very good length and grip on the still quite youthful finish. This is a very well-balanced Extra Brut that could use a couple of years to really blossom from behind its structure, but which will provide plenty of enjoyment once it has fully emerged from behind its structure. 2015-2030. **92**.

2005 Pierre Brigandat et Fils Brut Millésime (Channes- Côte des Bar)

The 2005 Pierre Brigandat et Fils Brut Millésime is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a complex and quite smoky bouquet of apple, warm bread, a complex base of chalky minerality, a touch of lavender, orange zest and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and crisp, with lovely focus and balance, a fine core, very elegant, pinpoint bubbles and outstanding cut and mineral drive on the backend to perfectly cradle the ripeness of the 2005 vintage. This is a high class bottle of bubbly that I would give a couple of years in the cellar to really allow it to blossom fully. 2015-2035. **92**.

2006 Michel Loriot “Pinot Meunier Vieilles Vignes” Brut Millésime (Festigny)

It had been a year since I last tasted the 2006 old vine bottling of pinot meunier from Michel Loriot, and the additional year's-worth of bottle age has certainly worked its magic on this lovely wine, as it is now wide open and really drinking with great beauty. The wine now offers up a simply stunning nose of apple, fresh almond, white peach, brioche, beautifully complex minerality, smokiness, notes of dried violets and still that faint savory note redolent of spices meats. On the palate the wine is still snappy and mineral-driven, with its full-bodied format taught and precise. The wine has outstanding focus and balance, a rock solid core, very refined mousse and superb, youthful complexity on the very, very long and exquisitely refined finish. This is a brilliant bottle of Champagne that is still climbing in quality, but is even better than it was a year ago! If you prize elegance and intensity of flavor, search out this wine! 2014-2030. **93+**.

D. Henriet-Bazin “Sélection des Parcelles” Premier Cru Brut NV (Villers-Marmery)

The Sélection des Parcelles cuvée from Henriet-Bazin is a fifty-fifty blend of chardonnay and pinot noir and was disgorged in January of 2013. This is an excellent wine that offers up a deep and vibrant bouquet of delicious apples, pears, chalky minerality, just a touch of pastry cream, brioche and lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and young, with impressive elegance, refined mousse, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the poised and snappy finish. This will need a year or two in the cellar to really come into its own, but it will be outstanding. 2014-2030. **91+**.

2006 D. Henriet-Bazin “Cuvée Marie-Amélie” Blanc de Blancs Brut (Villers-Marmery)

The 2006 Cuvée Marie-Amélie from Henriet-Bazin is a lovely wine on both the nose and palate, with only slightly larger bubbles keeping the score down a touch, as the complexity here is very impressive. The superb bouquet is a ripe and pure blend of pear, peach, brioche, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, hazelnuts and a gentle topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, the aforementioned (ever so slightly) larger bubbles, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the blossoming finish. Structurally, this wine could use a year or two more in the cellar to really unwind fully, but the aromatics and flavors are already starting to show some lovely secondary layers of complexity that makes it very approachable already. 2014-2025+. **90**.

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Jean Velut Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature NV (Montgueux)

Denis Velut is now the third generation to run Champagne Jean Velut in the village of Montgueux, which lies in the extreme southern section of the appellation just outside of the city of Troyes. This is a very unique terroir for chardonnay in the Côte des Bar, as it is the only place in Champagne where a pure and deep base of limestone is laced with flinty silex soils (like one finds in Pouilly-sur-Loire and certain sections of Sancerre). The new release of Monsieur Velut's Brut Nature Blanc de Blancs is a very fine bottle, offering up a complex nose of pear, warm bread, a lovely base of those silex-infused, chalky soils, a touch of fresh almond and a youthful topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very nicely balanced for Brut Nature, with elegant mousse, fine focus and grip and a long, well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2013-2025. **91.**

Jean Velut "Brut Tradition" NV (Montgueux)

The flint-laced, chalky terroirs of Montgueux are very much in evidence in Denis Velut's non-vintage bottling as well. The new release of Brut Tradition from Monsieur Velut is comprised of a blend of eighty-five percent chardonnay and fifteen percent pinot noir and it is outstanding, offering up a superb nose of pear, white peach, brioche, lemon zest, gently musky floral tones and a complex base of flinty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a fine core, small, but not overly fine mousse, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the very classy finish. Last year, I downgraded this bottling a touch because its bubbles were a touch more coarse than the very top non-vintage Bruts that I tasted, but I think that was a mistake, as this wine has such a lovely level of complexity and depth that I have no trouble living with slightly more aggressive mousse found here. Fine juice. 2013-2025+. **92.**