

2008 v 2009 CHAMPAGNE

A TALE OF TWO SEPTEMBERS



Both are “September harvests,” but the 2008 and 2009 Champagne vintages could not be more different in style, says **Tom Stevenson**, with the former being more acid-driven and the latter richer. But which of these two vintages—both considered among the finest of the century so far—produced the better wines? **Essi Avellan MW** and **Simon Field MW** joined Stevenson for a tasting of 2008 and 2009 Vintage wines that showed the 2008s to be narrowly ahead

Rated by some as the two greatest vintages of the first decade of the new millennium, 2008 and 2009 are both born of classic “September harvests,” yet they are stylistically the antithesis of one another. August harvests, when the diurnal difference drops from around 59° to 41°F (15° to 5°C), have always existed but very much as a rare occurrence until the 3rd millennium, when uniquely Champagne experienced three August harvests within just a nine-year span (2003, 2007, and 2011). As a rule, September vintages are leaner, with higher acidity and a lower pH, but within this generalization there are numerous variances, with the 2008s absolute classics of their genre, whereas the 2009s are more generous and lush. Based on the potential alcohol, total acidity, tartaric-malic breakdown, and pH, the 2008s are reminiscent of the acid-driven 1988s, while the 2009s are closest to richer 2002s.

The *vins clairs* for both vintages were hugely impressive, but it is only now, as increasing numbers of wines have begun to appear on the market, that we can start evaluating 2008 and 2009 for real.

To view any Champagne vintage through the lens of its *vins clairs* is a bit like trying to appreciate a landscape

with macular degeneration—what we can see is certainly not what we are trying to look at! How can we tell the vintage character of any year when the bulk of every harvest, however good it might be, ends up in the *assemblage* of Non-Vintage blends, and vintage cuvées are produced in very much smaller volumes from superior wines? The difference between the two expressions of any single year is considerable. The Non-Vintage cuvées will always be chaptalized (between 0.8 and 1.8% ABV on average), whereas most vintage cuvées will not. When added to the effect of the second fermentation (which increases the alcohol by 1.2–1.5% ABV), it is clear to see where the average Non-Vintage Champagne gets its classic lean structure from, because it effectively has a 9.5% body with 12–12.5% of alcohol. On the other hand, Vintage Champagnes are not so much a reflection of the year in which they were harvested, as the product of strict selection that invariably results in significantly riper wines than the norm. It could be argued that the base wines for Non-Vintage blends are closer to the true vintage character than vintage cuvées, which by definition must be richer and fuller than the overall character of the year in question.

This is why the first comprehensive look at any vintage as its wines start to hit the shelf is always an eagerly anticipated moment. It is only at this juncture that we get to taste and compare a large number of Champagnes from a specific vintage and begin to deduce whether they bear any resemblance to the overall impressions that we gained from the *vins clairs*.

The 2008 vintage

Following a cool and cloudy summer, the weather at last warmed up, which allowed the harvest to commence on September 15, after which the vines enjoyed two weeks of warm, dry, and breezy weather. Despite *coulure*, *millerandage*, and localized fierce hailstorms conducting nature's own form of green-pruning, the crop was nevertheless large, averaging some 14,228kg/ha. The grapes were very clean and of exceptional quality for all three classic varieties, though the Pinot Noir *vins clairs* clearly stood out. Pre-release tastings confirmed the exceptionally high quality of this vintage, indicating a very fresh, direct, and invigorating style, exquisitely poised with the crispest acidity, great linearity, and boundless energy. There were certainly some great

Chardonnays, but the greatest of the Pinot Noir *vins clairs* were special—spectacular, even.

The 2009 vintage

Champagne was blessed with its first real summer in six years, but thankfully 2009 was nowhere near as extreme as the drought year of 2003. In fact, there were only two blemishes on what was otherwise a perfect growing season: downy mildew between May and July, and on the evening of September 4 localized hail in Chouilly, Damery, Hautvillers, and Verzenay, but the drying effect of a brisk northerly breeze managed to keep both episodes nicely contained. Picking began on September 8, just as the grapes had started to ripen, resulting in a healthy crop of 12,276kg/ha. Grapes were fully and evenly ripe across all three major varieties. On paper, this vintage appeared to be at least as good as 2008, possibly even superior, and the *vins clairs* exhibited elegant aromas with lovely floral notes, soft fruit, and beautifully ripe acidity—traits that were emphasized when tasting pre-release.

2008 and 2009 on paper

When do *chefs de caves* draw a line in the sand and start thinking that perhaps they should select a vintage in any particular year? For an exceptional terroir such as Philipponnat's Clos des Goisses, with its so-called south-south-facing slope, there is no line in the sand because a Vintage could be produced every year. It is also perfectly feasible for great prestige cuvées like Cristal and Dom Pérignon to craft a vintage quality each and every year, since they have exclusive access to such an abundance of vineyards in Champagne and the no-expense-spared budgets to achieve their aims that a Vintage can be achieved in even the most difficult years, subject only to yield. But these are the exceptions. The widely accepted yardstick for a potential Vintage year in Champagne has always been when the harvest weather is fine, when the grapes are healthy, when the natural potential alcohol hits double digits, and when the Pinot Noir is smokin'! That's because every year in Champagne is a Chardonnay year! The double-digit alcohol is most often quoted, but it is not a hard and fast rule. There are many

TABLE 1

Natural, unassisted levels when harvested						
Year	% ABV	Total acidity ¹	Total acidity ²	% tartaric	% malic	pH
2009	10.3	7.5	11.5	55.8	44.2	3.08
2008	9.8	8.6	13.2	51.6	48.4	2.98

TABLE 2

After first fermentation without MLF				After first fermentation with MLF		
Year	Total acidity ¹	Total acidity ²	pH	Total acidity ¹	Total acidity ²	pH
2009	7.3	11.2	3.08	5.3	8.2	3.19
2008	8.1	12.5	3.03	6	9.2	3.14

1. Total acidity expressed as sulfuric acid. 2. Total acidity expressed as tartaric acid.

TABLE 3

Analysis of scores by vintage						
Tasters	2008 average	2008 range	2009 average	2009 range	Number of 2008 scores over 90	Number of 2009 scores over 90
Panel	90	85-94	87	83-92	17/28 (61%)	4/24 (16%)
EA	90	88-94	89	85-93	18/28 (64%)	10/24 (42%)
SF	89	85-92	87	81-90	5/28 (18%)	2/24 (8%)
TS	91	78-99	87	76-98	19/28 (68%)	8/24 (42%)

THE SOUL OF 2009 WAS FORGED IN THE SUMMER, WHEREAS IN 2008 THE CROP WAS STRUGGLING TO RIPEN UNTIL AUTUMN. BOTH ARE RIPE VINTAGES, BUT IT IS HOW AND WHEN THAT RIPENESS WAS ACHIEVED THAT DEFINES THEIR CONTRASTING VINTAGE CHARACTERS

fine vintages where the region as a whole has not reached 10% ABV (1975, 1979, 1982, 1988, 1995, 1998, and, of course, 2008 were all between 9.4% and 9.8%), but as those crops approached the defining higher alcoholic potential, so the Champenois started to think "Vintage," and even though none made double-digits, it became clear that they were true Vintage quality and would eventually be widely declared.

As we can see from the regionwide stats in table 1 above, 2009 definitely falls on the right side of the line drawn

in the sand for a "Vintage," whereas 2008 is just nudging up to it. This is the difference a summer makes. The soul of 2009 was forged in the summer of that year, whereas in 2008 the crop was struggling to ripen until it was bathed in autumnal sun (albeit more breezy than hot). Both are ripe vintages—that is, more tartaric acid than malic—but it is how and when that ripeness was achieved that defines their contrasting vintage characters. Although the Champagnes of 2008 are most definitely acid-driven and the total acidity (TA) of 8.6g/l at harvest was very good, it was not exceptional, whereas its pH of 2.98 most certainly was. We have to go back to 1996 and 1988 to find any Champagne Vintages with a pH below 3, but with 52.5 percent and 52.9 percent of malic acid respectively, they were technically unripe years. While it is perfectly logical that malic years like 1996 and 1988 should have such a low pH, it is nothing short of extraordinary that 2008 could have a pH of 2.98 with 51.6 percent of ripe tartaric acid (table 1).

After the first fermentation, total acidity drops and pH increases, particularly for wines that have gone through malolactic fermentation (MLF), which effectively means the vast majority of Champagne (table 2).

The tasting

We tasted 55 wines in total, but one was a duplicate to keep us on our toes, and two were faulty, thus removed from the results because they would have distorted the relative scores for each vintage. There are, therefore, notes and scores for 53 Champagnes published in the following pages, and these consist of 28 from 2008 and 24 from 2009. Normally we like to taste both vintages from each producer at WFW, but since there are more 2008s on the market than 2009s, this was not always possible. In order to taste as many examples of each vintage as we could, some producers submitted just one vintage, while others offered multiple representations of both vintages. We also have wines specifically disgorged for the tasting and others that are commercial disgorgements—that is, the same as you will find on the shelf. All special disgorgements are clearly indicated “disgorged mid-2016.” Finally, we have both 75cl bottles and 150cl magnums. (If a wine is not clearly designated as a magnum, please assume it to be a 75cl bottle.)

Results and conclusions

Considering that seven to eight years of age is relatively young for a great vintage, I thought the softer, riper 2009s stood a very good chance of sneaking an edge over the 2008s, but that was not to be. Of the ten Champagnes that were an exact match in terms of cuvée, bottle format, and disgorgement, we rated the 2008s higher for nine of the pairs, four unanimously (De Castelnau Brut Millésime 2008, Deutz Amour de Deutz Millésime Brut 2008, Deutz Blanc de Blancs Brut 2008, and Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut 2008 disgorged mid-2016) and five by majority decision (Deutz Brut 2008, Deutz William Deutz Brut Millésime 2008, Devaux & Michel Chapoutier Sténopé Brut 2008 magnum, Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage 2008 disgorged mid-2016, and Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut 2008 magnum disgorged mid-2016). The panel considered the tenth pair, De Castelnau Blanc de Blancs Millésime Brut 2008 and 2009, to be equal (table 3).

Whichever way we slice and dice the scores, 2008 comes out the clear winner, as both Essi and Simon make

AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES		
	Average	Range
Tasting	89	76-99
EA	90	85-94
SF	88	81-92
TS	89	76-99

TOM STEVENSON'S TOP WINES	
Canard-Duchêne Brut Millésime Authentic Vintage (magnum) 2008	99
Castelnau Blanc de Blancs Millésime Brut 2009	98
Thiénot Brut Vintage (magnum) 2008	98
Lanson Echantillon Gold (magnum) 2009	96
Lanson Echantillon Gold (magnum) 2008	96
Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Brut 2008	96
Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut (magnum) 2008	96
Deutz Amour de Deutz Millésime Brut 2008	92
Pierre Gimonnet Special Club Millésime de Collection Brut 2008	91
Thiénot Brut Vintage 2008	91

LIKE ESSI, I FIND 2008 INTRINSICALLY SUPERIOR, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT 2009 IS NOT A GREAT VINTAGE—JUST THAT OVERALL 2008 IS GREATER

abundantly clear in their summaries. There were high-scoring wines among the 2009s but nowhere near as many as the 2008s. Like Essi, I find 2008 intrinsically superior, but that does not mean that 2009 is not a great vintage—just that, overall, 2008 is greater. If we take equal-scoring 2008s and 2009s, they have to be declared equal by definition. If we take higher-scoring 2009s, we have to say that those 2009s are indeed superior to lower-scoring 2008s, but overall, at this juncture, the 2008 vintage has trounced the 2009.

If we take 91 points as the cutoff for the panel's highest-scoring wines, no fewer than 11 of the top 14 are 2008s, and four producers (Deutz, De Castelnau, Lanson, and Thiénot) all have double entries, and only Lanson

and De Castelnau achieved a parity in scoring for both vintages.

I have to admit that I was surprised to find Canard-Duchêne 2008 in pole position. Okay, it was a magnum, and the magnums certainly stood out for me in this tasting, with no fewer than five of my top seven in this larger format, but Canard-Duchêne? Was it an aberration? I don't think so. It was also one of Essi's three equal-top-scoring wines. Obviously we both loved the wine. When Canard-Duchêne was merely Veuve Clicquot's second brand, its performance from year to year and across the range was perhaps more consistent, but it was certainly less inspiring than it is today. Under its current ownership as part of the Thiénot group, Canard-Duchêne has gone through peaks and troughs, and although some of those peaks have been pretty impressive, there has been nothing quite like its 2008. It is a wine of an entirely different order, and if I am true to my own judgment, I will not only have to buy a shedload for myself but will also recommend any Champagne devotee who cares more about quality than name to do the same. And I doubt that it is any coincidence that the eponymous Thiénot 2008 in magnum was equal second among my personal favorites, not to mention the Thiénot 2008 in 75cl coming equal fourth.

Canard-Duchêne 2008 in magnum was my very highest-scoring wine in this tasting, but for the panel as a whole it shared first place with Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Brut 2008 and if we had to split the two, it would have to be the Moët that came out on top, because it was the only Champagne that features among the personal favorites of all three tasters. This throws a cat among the pigeons, because Benoît Gouez, the *chef de cave* at Moët, firmly believes that 2009 is the superior of these two vintages. If the man whose 2008 came top in a tasting that so conclusively rated that vintage to be superior, what will his 2009 be like? I certainly thought his 2009 could indeed be superior (see “2000–2011 Champagne,” *WFW* 38, 2012, pp.130–43), but a definitive judgment cannot be made until the wine has been released. We need to run this tasting again in a few years, but 2008 is king for now.

Canard-Duchêne Brut Millésime Authentic Vintage (magnum) 2008 (12% ABV) **94**

EA | Soft, layered nose, with lots of aging characters. Croissant, toast, apricot pie, and wine gums. Boosted, pristine fruitiness also on the creamy palate of caressing mousse. Voluminous but fresh and light-appearing. Long, with a lemony bite at the crunchy finish. Delicious already today but with fine potential. | **94**

SF | Unabashed oaky nose, fig and verbenas behind it, plenty of adjectival potential for the taster...

A fulsome orchard-fruit palate, puppy-like in its youthful exuberance, almost evanescent in its youthful joie de vivre. One to follow. | **89**

TS | Mega-complex, rich Champagne fruit of great finesse with heaps of Madagascan vanilla on the mid-palate and finish. This has to have a place in my cellar! | **99**

Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Brut 2008 (12.5% ABV) **94**

EA | Beautifully aging citrusy nose, with layers of delicious toasty nuances. There is intrinsic finesse and cool fruitiness to the creamy palate. Lovely purity and precision but still with lots to come. | **93**

SF | Luminous, encrusted with a fine jeweled bead, its complex architecture worn lightly.

Multidimensional in aspect, well taut in shape, a most promising example, still fiercely young. | **92**

TS | A gunpowder and citrus explosion! This is Gorgeous! | **96**

Deutz Amour de Deutz Millésime Brut 2008 (12% ABV) **92**

EA | Classy, fresh fruit-driven nose, with mineral and toasty notes over lemony-floral fruit. Lovely nervousity and playfulness on the palate. Long, suitably dosed, crisp and crunchy finish. A cool breeze and brightness of fruit. Exemplary. | **94**

SF | An impressive bead and then a delightful nose of fig, quince, and distantly desired digestive biscuit. A little too much sugar on the palate maybe, somewhat undermining the poetic inclinations of the first impressions. | **87**

TS | Exquisitely light and fluffy mousse, just so elegant. Rich and easy, yet thoughtful due to its complexity. Delightful citrus aftertaste. | **94**

Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage (magnum) 2008 (12.5% ABV; disgorged mid-2016) **92**

EA | Come-hither, soft nose, with red and yellow fruit depth and fine biscuity complexity and even a toasty whisper. Attacking palate, contrasting to the mellowness-promising nose. Lots of acidity and nervousity. Long, steely, citric finish. Power and precision, with lots more to come. Classy. | **94**

SF | Reduced and chalky but with a reassuring mousse balm. Quite acidic, *enfin*, lean and fairly austere—a style that may lead many tasters to feel a little undervalued. | **87**

TS | So many expressions of 2008 in this tasting, and this is a fruity one, yet one that begins its complexity as soon as it hits the palate. | **96**

Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage 2009 (magnum) (12.5% ABV; disgorged mid-2016) **92**

EA | Expressive nose with apple fruit and spicy depth. Profound on the palate, too, toward a vinous style. Fine, fruit-lining acidity accentuating the length. Dry and invigorating finish. | **90**

SF | Light lemony color and equally youthful aromas: citrus and lime. Steely and a touch raw. Lowish *dosage* and a purity on the finish. One detects a Mesnil austerity. Long and powerful. | **89**

TS | Quite a weighty wine within a classic, correctly lean structure. Lemon notes. Mousse fine but displays its presence on the palate. Long, peacock's tail of mainly lime but various citrus notes on the finish. Really impressive. | **96**

Thiénot Brut Vintage (magnum) 2008 (12.5% ABV) **92**

EA | Bright, fruity nose loaded with lemon and lemon-candy notes alongside floral scents.

Intensely fruity on the sweet-seeming palate, too. Lovely, zesty, linear acidity, and long, boosted finish. Really attractive opulent fruit but more fruity than fine to date. | **92**

SF | Exuberant oaky nose, lively bubbles, and plenty of chutzpah. The *dosage* is a little high for this taster, however, and there is a slight sense of being let down by a lack of self-belief on the part of the winemaker. | **85**

TS | A wonderfully mellow version of this fresh, lively, classic, acid-driven vintage. Textbook lean structure, with great yeast-aged complexity. | **98**

De Castelnau Blanc de Blancs Millésime Brut 2008 (12.5% ABV) **91**

EA | Red fruit, toffee, and burned sugar on the age-complexed nose, with plentiful secondary characters. Wide and round palate with fine freshness and firmness of structure. There is lots building up in the glass. | **91**

SF | Unassuming yet persistent both in color and nose, with modest autolysis held gently in suspension and notes of honey and expensive confectionary, both well judged. Maybe lacking the concentration of the very best examples, the wine nonetheless is refined, with a honeysuckle garland far from discrete behind the arras. | **89**

TS | Lovely fruit developing vanilla-tinged bottle-mature complex aromas. Fine, long, lovely acids. | **92**

De Castelnau Blanc de Blancs Millésime Brut 2009 (12.5% ABV) **91**

EA | Glossy, fruity nose speaking of sunshine, with a lovely lemony edge. Complementing creamy-yeasty tones. Round, generous palate without being at all heavy; not hugely layered, though. Suitable *dosage* and a succulent, fresh finish. | **89**

SF | A pale color and delicate filigree; nose of a summer garden after rain, with a splash of verbenas. The sugar on the palate is too high, however; the bucolic bliss is compromised by intervention and misplaced ideals. | **85**

TS | Lovely, sumptuous, creamy aroma, with a Madagascan vanilla note. Gorgeous fruit on the palate. Absolutely textbook 2009! | **98**

Deutz Blanc de Blancs Brut 2008 (12% ABV) **91**

EA | Expressive nose with plentiful aging aromas, pastry shop, baked apple, and toast alongside fresh apple fruit. Bright and intense on the palate, too. Not hugely refined or complex but intensely fruity, coming with a character of its own. Long, fruit-bursting finish, with energizing sweet-and-sour contrast. | **91**

SF | Precocious, gifted, resolute; a finely burnished citric hue, then aromas from the kitchen garden, bolstered by citric fruit and a gentle hint of honey; nougat and soft ginger, a nicely weighted finish; softly sweet, understated, fine. | **92**

TS | Lovely, soft, super-fine mousse underscoring deliciously fresh, citrus-edged tropical fruits, with a long and lingering finish. | **91**

Pierre Gimonnet & Fils Special Club Millésime de Collection Brut 2008 (12.5% ABV) **91**

EA | Beautifully fruity and pronounced yet complex nose, with yeasty richness. There is yeasty fullness also on the palate of equal grandeur. Salivating freshness and minerality on the palate that finishes notably but suitably dry. Still young and tight. | **91**

SF | Flamboyant and energetic, an imprimatur of the potential of the vintage, no thanks to the house in question, I suspect. | **87**

TS | Really lovely, super-soft mousse gently caressing amazingly high, typically 2008 acids. | **94**

Jacquart Blanc de Blancs Brut 2009 (12.5% ABV) **91**

EA | Attractive, pure, coolly fruity, and delicate nose, with lemon, flowers, and creamy complexity. Soft, caressing palate, with lovely, perfectly integrated zesty acidity and long succulent length. Instant pleasure in a friendly style. | **92**

SF | Soft color and an energetic mousse; baking spice and cinnamon on the nose, with a whisper of brioche and hedgerow. Palate has a Pinot character, with redcurrant, plum, and a bed of praline. Quite a marked *dosage*, but the purity of the cherry-fruit personality carries the day with aplomb. | **89**

TS | Not much complexity at first, but soft, perfumed, pretty aromas with citrus notes emerging. Fine mousse. Light, long, and linear. | **92**

Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut (magnum) 2008 (12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016) **91**

EA | Soft nose of pastry, peach, and candied tones in a ripe, clean style. Big fruit on the voluminous but not heavy palate. A fruit-bomb, with invigorating tartness and juicy length. | **90**

SF | Chalky and slightly cloudy; a nose of tobacco and wet stone; the finish is unformed and

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questioning, uncooked, but vestigial quality may well out over time... | **88**

TS | So complete! Yet so youthful and so capable of development. Brilliant, yeast-complexed citrus fruits. I could drink this all night! | **96**

Thiénot Brut Vintage 2008 | 91

(12.5% ABV)

EA | Soft, ripe, fruity nose with pastry complexity. Full and generous on the palate, too. Fresh enough but not particularly so. Long, harmonious palate from beginning to end. | **90**

SF | Attractive golden color and pleasingly persistent mousse; hints of sulfur soon vindicated by grapefruit and verbena, poised taut acidity, and a linear, persuasive finish. | **89**

TS | Fine, sherbety fruit, tangy and long, with a sherbety-smooth and soft mousse. | **94**

Veuve Clicquot Vintage Brut 2008 | 91

(12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Fresh, youthful nose, with a lemony-floral fruit profile and spicy edge. Crisp, nervy palate. Light-weight and long, with attractive, clean, crunchy fruitiness. Long and refreshing. | **91**

SF | Soft color and a nose of peach and oatmeal; the impressive palate has weight and excellent length, edgy but finely constructed, silky in its aspiration. | **89**

TS | Lean yet muscular, highlighted by high but fine acids. Linear, long, and tapering finish. Classy. | **92**

Deutz Amour de Deutz Rosé Millésime Brut 2008 | 90

(12% ABV)

EA | Pale salmon rosé color. Elegant restraint on the fruit-driven pretty nose, with smoky layers. Intense yet lightweight, driven and harmonious from beginning to end. Neatly made and elegant, yet fruity and polished, with charm. | **92**

SF | Lighter amber color, lively mousse, and a pleasant nose of woodsmoke and forest floor. Nicely poised on the finish, energetic and compromising. | **89**

TS | Another static 2008 waiting to emerge. Has everything from acidity to fruit and everything in between, but it still needs a little time to express itself. | **88**

Drappier Grande Sendrée Brut 2008 | 90

(12% ABV)

EA | Ripe, sweet nose of apricot and apple fruit coming with a mild oxidative undertone. Mouth-filling, even fatty in texture, but refreshed by the crisp acidity. There is a lot of fruit, but it could use some more finesse. Sweet-and-sour impression. | **89**

SF | Generous mousse, and a red-fruit character that betrays an outstanding pedigree: black cherry, fig, plums, and honeysuckle. Maybe a little overworked on the sugar; otherwise, impressive indeed. | **88**

TS | Lovely yeast-complexed fruit, more peach than citrus. A high-energy palate, with a sumptuous mousse. | **92**

Jacquart Brut Vintage 2008 | 90

(12.5% ABV)

EA | Oxidative notes predominate the first nose. Beyond, there is richness of red fruit. Round, fleshy palate that is sweet and generous at first but turns dry and severe. Contrasting. | **88**

SF | Unassuming, but with plenty of fizz and energy behind a modest hue. The fruit character is nicely judged, ripe but not overly so, sweet but not too sweet, and with a bittersweet savory finish that will merit relatively early appreciation. | **89**

TS | Creamy malo nose, really coming through on the palate, with smoky complex notes. It builds in the mouth. Buy now, drink later. | **92**

Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage 2008 | 90

(12.5% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Mild nose with red-fruit depth allied to delicate spicy notes. A whisper of oxidative undertones. Heaps of fruit on the palate, lovely energy, and a dry finish that does not feel at all too dry. | **89**

SF | Sinewy, raw, sepulchral; youthful in the sense of RD, imposing in the sense of sheer power, and with an architectural integrity... Brooding, elegantly. | **90**

TS | Youthfully complex citrus fruits on both nose and palate, supported by a super-soft mousse, providing an underlying textural creaminess. | **90**

Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Rosé Brut 2008 | 90

(12.5% ABV)

EA | Very deep cherry rosé color. Super-fruity, bursting of red berries. Big, fruity palate, too, with Pinot vinosity. Refreshed and elevated by the fine acidity. Long, strong, Pinot finish with little phenolics. | **89**

SF | Generous, deep, oaky salmon color, nose almost gamey, certainly vinous. Nicely taut on the finish, with grip and gastronomic potential in evidence. | **89**

TS | This might be fatter than I prefer, and it is not my favorite color of the 2008 rosés. However, it definitely is my favorite rosé of the 2008s tasted today, with its fruit-laden toasty notes providing an essential point of difference. | **92**

Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut 2008 | 90

(12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Welcoming, apricot and peachy fruit. Sweet, ripe overall impression, with candied and marmalade-like tones. Lovely crunchiness on the vibrant palate. Opulent, clean, crisp fruit. Long, succulent length. | **90**

SF | An energetic mousse and then a softly persuasive fruit character: honeysuckle and hints of red cherry. Pepper and grip, an autolytic imperative, and finely balanced sugar, already well integrated. | **89**

TS | Fresh silky mousse supporting fine citrus fruits. Crisp, long, and invigorating on the palate. High energy! | **90**

Taittinger Brut Millésime 2009 | 90

(12.5% ABV)

EA | Lovely, yeast-complexed, gunpowdery nose with lemon curd, meringue, white flowers. Superb acidity expressed as vitality and drive. Smooth and caressing but at the same time invigorating and energizing. Very youthful, still with potential. | **93**

SF | Generous persistent mousse and serious, complex aromas, acidity and sugar battling it out on the hitherto unresolved limey palate. Needs time, though one wonders if the raw materials are sufficiently resourceful to make the grade. | **88**

TS | Lovely vanilla-tinged fruit, with aromatics building on both the nose and the finish. | **90**

De Castelnau Brut Millésime 2008 | 89

(12.5% ABV)

EA | Overt, pronounced, ripe, fruity nose with candied tones complemented by an attractive coffee whiff. Lots of aging notes. Crisp, youthful palate with a biting lemony finish. There is a contrast between the maturing nose and still-youthful palate, but both are fine as such. Seems too young and tight on the palate still. | **91**

SF | Robust, oaky, and complete; defers to the quality of the vintage without ever surrendering the musculature of its house style. | **89**

TS | Well-balanced lime-dominated citrus fruits; this needs a year or two to break out of its shell and express more individual complexity. | **88**

Deutz Blanc de Blancs Brut 2009 | 89

(12% ABV)

EA | Strong, deep, red fruit-driven nose lined with pastry and baking spice tones. Expressive, wide, fleshy palate with slightly loose mousse but seamlessly integrated acidity. Big, ripe, but successful style. | **90**

SF | A nicely understated example, its potential only evidenced on the finish, where whistle-bright acidity is garlanded by almonds, soft fruits, and Eastern spice. In a minor key, but played with plenty of vibrato. | **89**

TS | Dominated by chocolaty Pinot, especially on the finish. | **88**

Deutz Brut 2008 | 89

(12% ABV)

EA | Very mild, almost muted yet clean nose. Crisp and lemony, very youthful still. Fine fruit quality and linear, long, juicy length. Needs time to open up properly. | **90**

SF | Attractive nose, pleasing notes of spice and cinnamon, with hints of pepper; thereafter, citric grip and a firm, resolute finish. One to watch, since clearly not made to impress the early judge—no bad thing per se, you may think. | **87**

TS | A lovely sort of fresh mellowness. Has the feeling that it will evolve very slowly. | **90**

Deutz William Deutz Brut Millésime 2008 | 89

(12% ABV)

EA | Squeaky-clean nose of polished, pristine fruitiness. Vibrant and oozing energy. Round

ESSI AVELLAN MW'S VERDICT

The battle between the vintages was over before it really began. At best, the 2009s were open, plush, and generous, with clean and friendly fruitiness. My personal highlights were Taittinger Brut Millésime and Jacquart Blanc de Blancs, which demonstrated genuine class, but neither had entered a 2008 counterpart for comparison. There was nothing "wrong" with the 2009s, but they just lacked the wow factor and structural finesse and vitality.

The fun began when the 2008s were poured, because the Champagnes were consistently full of energy, drive, and beautifully pure fruitiness: sheer joy to savor already today but also with great potential for the future. My best-rated 2008s included a strong trio from Deutz: Amour de Deutz, Amour de Deutz Rosé, and Cuvée William Deutz. Furthermore, Lanson Gold Label and Canard-Duchêne Authentic Millésime charmed me in magnum format.

When there were samples to compare, I preferred the 2008s 12 times and the 2009 only twice (Lanson Gold Label [75cl] and Sténopé). And twice the verdict was tied (Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs magnum and André Robert Grand Cru Le Mesnil Blanc de Blancs). A mere two 2009s received 92 or more points from me, whereas the figure for the 2008s was as high as seven. Despite the small sample we had, I consider my verdict conclusive. The softness and generosity of the 2009s left them in the shadow of the racy and coolly elegant 2008s.

TOP WINES

Canard-Duchêne Brut Millésime Authentic Vintage (magnum) 2008 **94**

Deutz Amour de Deutz Millésime Brut 2008 **94**

Lanson Gold Label (magnum) 2008 **94**

Deutz William Deutz Brut Millésime 2008 **93**

Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Brut 2008 **93**

Taittinger Brut Millésime 2009 **93**

Deutz Amour de Deutz Rosé Millésime Brut 2008 **92**

Jacquart Blanc de Blancs Brut 2009 **92**

Thiénot Brut Vintage (magnum) 2008 **92**

palate with plentiful fruit enhanced by the zingy acidity. Creamy mousse and long, sweetly fruity succulent finish. | **93**

SF | A modest color and then a nose of verberna, seaweed, and a whisper of chapel after school. A nicely judged palate, orchard fruit and something of the kitchen garden. | **89**

TS | Well blended yeast-complexed melange with a twist of barley sugar on the aftertaste. Lovely citrus fruit underscoring fresh fruit salad, supported by a fine mousse and lovely acidity. | **86**

Devaux & Michel Chapoutier Sténopé Brut (magnum) 2008 | **89**
(12% ABV)

EA | Sweet nose with lemony and candied notes overlaying an oaky and vanilla layer. Intense, long, and seemingly sweet, but the use of oak appears clumsy. | **88**

SF | Oakly and somewhat unsubtle, a youthful and swaggering example. The palate is big-boned, forthright, and very difficult to assess. | **87**

TS | For an oak-dominated style, this must be close to as good as it gets. Super-fresh lemony-oak dominating citrus fruit, mainly lime, and beautifully high acids to give an amazingly long finish. | **92**

Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage 2009 | **89**
(12.5% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Fresh, fruit-driven nose with orange blossom, apricot, and punch. Big, sweet palate, with profound fruitiness and ripe, candied style. Underneath there is zesty, biting acidity driving the wine. Succulent, appetizing finish. | **90**

SF | Raw, amylic, and a little reduced, yet with a persistent bead and flinty, pleasingly restrained aromas. The palate is austere, firm, its dosage marked but not excessive, the ripeness of the wine impressive but not overwhelming. | **88**

TS | Gently rich and satisfying, lovely acids and a long, tapering finish. | **88**

Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut 2009 (magnum) | **89**
(12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Attractively fruity nose with red apple, peach, and orange-blossom notes. Soft, fluffy mousse on the harmonious, succulent palate. Opulent, ripe, fresh fruitiness and vivacious, vigorous finish. | **90**

SF | A modest color cedes to a nose dominated by elderflower and hints of cow parsley; the palate is chalky, a little lean, devoid of the mid-palate generosity normally associated with this vintage but not lacking in linearity and poise. | **88**

TS | Clean, pure aromas, with fine, linear fruit on the palate. | **90**

Veuve Clicquot Vintage Rosé Brut 2008 | **89**
(12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Medium-deep salmon color. Brilliantly fruity and sweet, yet with a cool expression. Perfumey pristine fruit with a waxy tone. Lots of Pinot comes

across in the structure, too, muscle and vinosity. Long, fruit-laden finish, with zingy acidity. Very young still, but more expression will follow. | **91**

SF | Burnished sheen, then a pleasingly restrained nose, herbal with hints of verberna in support; quite tight and not especially forthcoming. | **87**

TS | Nicely evolved, but sitting in the eye of the storm, waiting to show its stuff. Buy and keep, but do not start drinking for 2 or 3 years. | **88**

Deutz Amour de Deutz Millésime Brut 2009 (12% ABV) | **88**

EA | First bottle had DMDS aromas; second bottle was fine. Soft, attractively clean nose, with lemon, cream, and apricots. Round, caressing, wide, and long palate, with enough freshness. Friendly and fresh complemented by age-derived mellowness. Fine drink today. | **90**

SF | Baked, slightly lactic nose; hints of patisserie balanced by flint and late-season apple. The palate is austere, the sugar still a little dysfunctional, the finish lacking promise. | **83**

TS | First bottle DMDS; second bottle fine. Such a huge difference! The first bottle I could hardly get my nose into the glass before I was repulsed by the pong; the second bottle was so compelling with its yeast-complexed fruit aromas that I could hardly draw my nose away to take a sip! Perfectly drinkable now, this Champagne will improve under perfect storage for several years to come. | **92**

Deutz Brut 2009 (12% ABV) | **88**

EA | Plenty of sun-kissed fruit on the ripe fruity nose of apple, yeast, and spice. Substantial palate with firm structure and plump apricot fruit expression. Refreshingly stingy acidity and long, fruity length. | **89**

SF | A little reduced, a nose of sourdough and straw. Palate is fatter than it ought to be, cosmetic, fickle... short... | **83**

TS | An absolute classic, yeast-complexed beauty. More ample and expansive than lean and linear, but pure textbook stuff. Delicious! | **92**

Deutz William Deutz Brut Millésime 2009 (12% ABV) | **88**

EA | Rather youthful, fruity, peachy nose, with yeasty pungency coming through. Round mouth-coating palate supported by feisty acidity. Lacks great dimensions but has attractive spectrum of ripe, crisp fresh fruits. | **89**

SF | Citric color and a marginally cloudy appearance; nose a little unforthcoming, mousse quick to dissipate; hints of hazelnut and vanilla, its oaky provenance more evident en bouche. The ensemble is a little clumsy, its inherent acidity not fully tamed by the efforts of the vigneron. | **84**

TS | It's the palate that tells the story here. Nothing wrong with the aromatics other than that they are not particularly impressive, while the fruit on the palate most certainly is, then the finish, although long, does not grab attention either. Keep three years at least, to stretch out the central core of quality on to the nose and finish. | **90**

GH Mumm Brut Le Millésime 2008 (12.5% ABV)

88

EA | There is a toffee note on the mild nose of ripe fresh fruits, spice, earthy minerality, and burned sugar. Fleshy, mellow palate, with increasing vivacity and refreshment toward the finish. Slightly loose-textured, with a calm mousse. | 90

SF | Slightly lactic, vanillin nose, then quite a sweet palate, its yellow-fruit character a little obscured... Something a little leafy on the end. | 85

TS | Nicely together, very well integrated for a 2008 at this stage. Already well endowed with basic yeast complexity, it promises to develop individual complex aromas. | 90

Le Brun de Neuville Grand Vintage Brut 2008 (12% ABV)

88

EA | Soft, overt nose of apple fruit and earthy-mineral complexity. An unfortunate oxidative tone. Fresh palate that dries to a hazelnutty finish. | 87

SF | Persistent mousse and small bubbles; refined aromas that borrow from the extensive lexicons of fruit and spice; nicely dry on the palate, with no shortage of gastronomic potential; finely judged and very complete. | 89

TS | Pity about the aldehydic aroma, because this has super-fresh fruit and a long, fine yeast-complexed, high-acid finish. Scored optimistically in the hope that the aldehydes are going, not building. | 88

Moutard Brut Cuvée des 6 Cépages 2008 (12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

88

EA | Oak-laden, lifted nose with varnish fruit. A degree of oxidation. Full, round palate of fine concentration and elevating acidity. Short of dimensions, overpowered by VA. | 86

SF | Stentorian color and assertive oaky nose; wet-stone fruit and rapier acidity, the oaky backdrop meshed with saline intent. Real power here; glory to come, one presumes... | 92

TS | Lifted fruit, very citrus, very long, with high acids. | 87

Philippe Gonet Le Mesnil-sur-Oger Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru 2009 (12% ABV)

88

EA | Singular, ripe, apple nose with a touch of spice and bruised notes. Weighty, intense palate verging on winey. Surprising freshness and nervousity at the finish. | 87

SF | Bright and clear, with a delicate gentle mousse and a subtle nose of fig, verbena, and brioche. Fully accommodating of the limitations of the vintage, a nicely constructed and elegant example, with an impressive and assertive finish. | 89

TS | No way of telling whether the very slight aldehydes are on the way out (because they can appear after disgorgement and fade away before released) or on the way in (because they are building due to insufficient SO₂ at disgorgement), but I hope it is the former and have scored accordingly. | 88

Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Brut 2009 (12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

88

EA | Overt nose with ripe marmalade characters and peachy and apple characters. Dry, edgy palate with spicy mineral characters. Long, succulent, fruity finish. | 88

SF | Pale color and a touch of reduction on the nose; a somewhat jejune mouthfeel, with marzipan and barley sugar noted but not much evidence of autolytic finesse. | 87

TS | Very smooth, fine, and elegant, with the plump fruit balanced by fine acids on the finish. Capable of being consumed now, but it needs a few years to show slowly evolved, complex aged notes. | 88

Canard-Duchêne Brut Millésime Authentic Vintage 2009 (12% ABV)

87

EA | Pungent floral nose with yeasty notes. Succulent palate with nervousity. More interesting palate but unconventional nose. Lacks refinement; the finish has a sweet feel to it. | 88

SF | Subtle of mousse and color but with a pleasing, quite intriguing nose; walnut, honeysuckle, and soft figs all juxtaposed. The palate is somewhat overwhelmed by the dosage, however, and all the potential hitherto described is instantly compromised by that lasting impression. | 86

TS | Soft and easy, with an underlying smokiness to the fruit and a long, lingering finish. | 87

De Castelnau Brut Millésime 2009 (12.5% ABV)

87

EA | Curious nose with a muted expression and strange aromatic profile: red-apple, orange blossom, grappa tones. Calm, vinous, almost oily palate. | 87

SF | Soft lemony color and a quickly dissipated mousse... Pleasant flavors of nectarine, poached pear, and Viennese pastry. A nicely constructed example deferring to, rather than challenging, the limitations of the vintage. | 88

TS | Easygoing, fine, fragrant fruit aromas on the nose and palate. | 86

Pierre Gimonnet & Fils Special Club Grands Terroirs de Chardonnay Brut 2009 (12.5% ABV)

87

EA | Lots of aging layers on the biscuity and nutty nose of sweet apricot fruit. More serious and severe on the palate, which feels drier than the nose suggested. Firm and feisty but could use a degree of sugar-coated charm. Promising nose and fine, intense fruitiness. | 90

SF | Bright color, golden and nicely luminous; a nose of brioche, oak, and vanillin; baking spice and a little wax; restraint and elegance, all embracing and successful. | 88

TS | Rich and assertive, with heaps of acidity, but for me the acidity is too heavy, rather than light and persistent. | 84

SIMON FIELD MW'S VERDICT

Tasting with the two most celebrated Champagne experts in the world is by turn fascinating and daunting, all the more so because of the incredible synchronicity in their palates, matched, thankfully, by a generous tolerance of the—how shall we say?—more old-fashioned palate of the third man. Today there was much to agree about, however, centering fundamentally on the superiority of the 2008 vintage. A great year and therefore one still to show its full glorious potential, 2008 was a classicist's delight, eschewing excess in vineyard and winery alike and allowing this most marginal of locations to descant through the latent complexities of its inner tensions. Finesse, balanced acidity, and latent power were evidenced in all the best examples. All of my top five wines were from 2008, yet it was nice to see, beyond a marginal preference for the blanc de blancs, a multiplicity of stylistic statements, with Moutard's fascinating 6 Cépages Cuvée a revelation (to me at least). Youth rendered many of the wines a little closed, but this was to be expected, and it was the quiet brooding authority of the best wines that stood out. 2009, by contrast, disappointed somewhat. Any anticipation of an '88 versus '89 contest was dashed. I was expecting from 2009 a ripe and forward vintage, probably perfectly *à point* now, its sunny exuberance providing a nourishing counterpoint to the more cerebral reticence of the wines from 2008. And yet... too often there was a paucity of concentration, and many examples were hollow of structure and lacked focus. One had anticipated lowish levels of acidity but also a more generous fruit profile that, ultimately, was not forthcoming. A closer comparison would perhaps be '98 versus '99, though with a wider gap between the two, 2008 topping the quartet, and 2009, on this showing at least, at the bottom.

TOP WINES

Deutz Blanc de Blancs Brut 2008 **92**

Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Brut 2008 **92**

Moutard Brut Cuvée des 6 Cépages 2008 **92**

Veuve Fourny Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru La Complexité 2008 **90**

Lanson Gold Label Brut Vintage 2008 **90**

R Pouillon Premier Cru Les Blanciens Brut Nature 2009 **90**

André Robert Grand Cru Le Mesnil Blanc de Blancs Brut 2009 **90**

R Pouillon Premier Cru Les Blanchiens Brut Nature 2009 | 87
(12% ABV)

EA | Overt appley nose with oaky hints and earthy-spicy characters and underlying oxidative tone. Floral, vanilla-laden yeasty complexity. Fleshy, zingy palate, which ends fully dry. Lots of energy and a mineral bite. Rather short due to dryness and woody finish. | 85

SF | Pale color and a generous tropical nose; oak oil and a lick of spice; elegant and warm, approachable and yet complex; hints of herb, white pepper, and peach stone on the finish support the endorsement and belie the low dosage. | 90

TS | Oak aldehydes dominating the nose, lifted fruit on the palate, a touch of bitterness on the finish, supported by a very smooth, creaming mousse. The longer it stays in the glass and the mouth, the more together it becomes. Now more refined, with lemony-oak dominating. Showing the effects of recent disgorgement. Rather disjointed now; needs a couple of years post-disgorgement aging to come together. | 85

André Robert Grand Cru Le Mesnil Blanc de Blancs Brut 2008 | 87
(12% ABV)

EA | Oxidative notes attack first. Underneath there is opulent fruit but not fully clean, old oak? Round, sweet-seeming palate, which dries toward the end. Energy is there, but the aroma needs polishing. | 87

SF | Delicious honeysuckle aromas embrace an oaky richly golden hue; an indulgent and very finely measured wine, its come-hither appeal underwritten by fine balancing acidity and a resolute sense of purpose. | 89

TS | Aldehydic, but nice, true 2008 acid-driven fruit underneath, developed sulfidic-toasty aromas. Second wine possibly TCA-affected. | 84

Veuve Fourny Extra-Brut Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru La Complexité 2009 | 87
(12% ABV)

EA | Soft, vanilla-laden nose, with plush fruitiness and under-control oxidative undertone. Round, subtly textured, even calm, winy palate. Firm acidity behind up-front fruitiness. Very dry and slightly drying at the finish. | 88

SF | A rather lactic nose with tropical hints behind; palate is broad, walnuts and cardamom, a little lacking in freshness, but harmonious and appealing for the shorter term. | 86

TS | Slightly aldehydic aroma, but very soft and nicely evolved fruit on the palate, linear, very soft, pincushion mousse. | 86

Devaux & Michel Chapoutier Sténopé Brut 2009 | 86
(12% ABV)

EA | Soft, gentle, cream-laden fresh-fruit nose with underlying spicy, licorice, and wood notes in absence of oxidation. Full-on round and fleshy palate with fluffy mousse and lingering sweet finish. | 90

SF | An attractive, softly oaky nose; scents of tobacco, acacia, and mandarin; palate is a little sweet but has impressive depth; a peach-and-poached-pear character and demonstrable acidic tension on the finish. | 89

TS | Hard-edged acids... I need to retaste this in five years! | 80

Gremillet Brut Millésime 2009 | 86
(12.5% ABV)

EA | Soft nose with ripe fruit, aging characters, and a funky lactic, vanilla, and woody undertone. Strong palate, winy in character with good concentration. Ripe and plump, with a character of its own but could do with some more depth and elegance. | 89

SF | Vegetal, raw, and essentially disagreeable. | 81

TS | First bottle VA-lifted and heavy on the palate. The second bottle was also VA-lifted but light on the palate... yet long and very persistent. | 87

Veuve Fourny Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru La Complexité 2008 | 86
(12% ABV)

EA | Mildly dusty note on the nose of apple, earthy spiciness and nutty layers. Firm, structured palate, with lovely electric acidity. Long, juicy, and fresh. | 89

SF | Dense color, powerful bubbles, oaky influence, and a steady hand on the tiller... Marked acidity is complemented by green and citric fruit and a healthy investment in unalloyed potential... | 90

TS | Aldehydic aromas spoil an otherwise fine Champagne. | 78

Coessens Lieu-dit Largillier Extra-Brut Millésime 2009 | 85
(12% ABV)

EA | Soft, mellow, clean nose with attractive light toastiness emerging. Plenty of ripe, plush, white fruit. Round, fleshy palate with good freshness and fruity generosity. Dry palate with length and drive. | 91

SF | Straw color and a nose of lime cordial and moderately underripe apples. Thereafter, the dosage surprises somewhat and overwhelms the ensemble, which creaks under the pressure of inferior architecture. | 84

TS | Lifted fruit aromas, rather simplistic. Soft, fine mousse. | 80

Joseph Perrier Cuvée Josephine Brut 2008 | 85
(12% ABV)

EA | Soft, overt, glossily fruity nose. Citrus fruit, white flowers, peach and chalky notes. Tight and suppressed on the palate that turns drying toward the end. Could use a dose of charm. | 88

SF | Lovely open color and a lively mousse: most promising. The wine is punctiliously constructed, with finely balancing acidity, then a fruit profile that borrows its references mainly from the citric end of the spectrum... There is nice poise on the finish, too. | 89

TS | Slightly aldehydic on the nose, building on the palate. | 78

R Pouillon Grand Cru Les Valnons Extra Brut 2009 | 84
(12% ABV; disgorged mid-2016)

EA | Bright, ripe fruity nose with yellow apple and apple pie notes with biscuity layers. Crisp super-dry palate that finishes medium-long with a hazelnutty, drying end. | 86

SF | A reticent nose blows off quickly to engage with aromas of peach stone and youthful orchard fruit. The palate is very dry, a little smoky and dusty, the recent disgorgement clearly still exercising its iron grip. A touch volatile, or varnished, if you will. | 87

TS | Soft, aldehydic-straw aroma, soft fruit with bitter-straw notes and a gumminess to the structure underneath. | 78

André Robert Grand Cru Le Mesnil Blanc de Blancs Brut 2009 | 84
(12% ABV)

EA | Predominantly oxidative nose with earthy-spicy oak character and slightly lifted fruitiness. Elemental generosity, even fatness, which is tamed by a steely acid line. Long dry finish. Overdone, masking finesse. | 87

SF | A rich golden color and appropriately generous warm nose; orange blossom, fig, quince and mango. The trappings of an oaky upbringing; indulgence is tempered by structure, however, and there is plenty of potential here. | 90

TS | Aldehydic aromas dominating nose and palate. Pity: nice structure and underlying fruit. | 76

Georges Vesselle Grand Cru Brut Millésime 2009 | 84
(12% ABV)

EA | Slightly peach-tinted color. Youthful, singular, lifted nose all about orange marmalade. Highly atypical. Sweet, plump, blowsy palate. | 85

SF | Forthcoming oaky nose, oily and assertive; thereafter confected, overtly sweet and directionless, with an oddly savory undertow adding a bitter note to the finish. | 84

TS | Lifted fruit, lacks complexity, but nothing wrong if all you want is a good guzzler! | 84

Henriet-Bazin Premier Cru Brut Nature Millésime 2009 | 83
(12.5% ABV)

EA | Oxidative nose with bruised tones. Cider and apple-jam fruitiness, rather one-dimensional due to oxidative overtones. Tight, feisty, minerality-driven palate. Unforgivingly dry and severe at the end with woody notes. | 85

SF | Welsh gold and an impressive and persistent mousse; oaky, rich aromatics and a measured austerity on the palate, peach stone, nectarine, incense, and soft spice. Crustaceans beckon; gastronomic potential and plenty of self-belief. | 89

TS | Strong aldehydic aromas, which are, presumably, the effect of no dosage. Really lean in structure with nothing to offset the aldehydes. | 76

The following wines were also tasted but deemed to be faulty: GH Mumm Brut Le Millésime 2009 and Deutz Amour de Deutz Rosé Millésime Brut 2009. ■