



CSWWC 2018: Where the best wines sparkle

Tom Stevenson surveys the world of sparkling wine as viewed through the results of the 2018 Champagne & Sparkling Wine World Championships, when it celebrated its fifth year with the launch of its first-ever Lifetime Achievement Awards and a new Rising Star trophy

One of the primary reasons I started the CSWWC was my concern that so many people, even in the wine business, struggle to taste this style. Some of the best red-wine tasters I know are rubbish at tasting sparkling wine. Many of them are happy to admit this, often claiming that the CO₂ gets in the way, limiting the number they can taste with any confidence. This is not due to any inherent inability. If Bordeaux specialists (for example) tasted as many sparkling wines as I have over the past 40 years, they would be just as proficient as I am at tasting sparkling wine, and a line-up of 100-plus sparkling wines would be no more of a challenge than a line-up of 100-plus Bordeaux wines. Mind you, had they tasted as many

sparkling wines as I have over the past 40 years, they would not be Bordeaux specialists, they would be sparkling-wine specialists! That is why, when I launched this competition, I decided to team up with world-class sparkling-wine experts Essi Avellan MW and Dr Tony Jordan. The CSWWC is a niche competition, and that's the way we like it, because this allows the same three specialist judges and our permanent reserve specialist judge (George Markus) to taste and evaluate every single wine submitted. We understand the product we are tasting: how it is made, what different varieties bring to the table, what autolysis adds to the equation, how sparkling wine ages before and after disgorgement, and

under ideal and less-than-ideal conditions. This expertise produces uniquely consistent results each year, even when it comes to subjective qualities. Whatever anyone says about the objectiveness of blind tasting, at some point in the process subjectivity comes into play, and each year it is the same expert palates, including all of our subjective idiosyncrasies, that are brought to bear on every single wine. We taste all entries blind, of course. For medals, we taste blind by provenance and style. For World Champion trophies, we pit the best from every origin against each other under blind conditions. Between these two extremes there are Best-in-Class awards and trophies for the best wines in each region

(where applicable) and country. The Regional and National trophies are where subjectiveness reigns supreme. How can you, for example, compare the best blanc de blancs with the best rosé? You cannot, of course. We start by applying objective qualitative parameters, searching for the best balance, where length is created by intensity, not weight. We look for the greatest elegance and finesse. All of the wines we are tasting, however, have already been through a similar process to achieve a Best-in-Class award, so the judging process quickly evolves into choices between freshness and complexity, neither of which should be mutually exclusive, but ultimately it is a decision of personal preference. For how else can you decide what is best between apples and pears? That is why all the Best-in-Class wines that failed to gain our favor in the quest for Regional or National trophies are given another chance purely and strictly within their own categories for World Champion Style trophies.

Competition logistics

Karl Franz of Sensible Wine Service is responsible for storage and service logistics. Unlike other competitions, he has strict instructions to bag-up all wines received in clear glass bottles. This protects them from light-strike, so no wines are penalized for what happens to them while under the care of CSWWC. It is so easy for a competition to mess up the quality of wines in clear glass bottles. They are vulnerable from the moment the packaging is removed, but perhaps the most dangerous situation is when the wines are sorted for numbering and later into flights, especially when they are kept under artificial light on sorting tables. Other compounds may make the light-struck aroma even worse, but foul-smelling dimethyl disulphide takes just 60 minutes (accumulative) to form under fluorescent light from methionine, a common sulfur-bearing amino acid found in all wines.

Orsi Szentkiralyi, our Director of Tasting Quality Control, tracks the judging panel one tasting behind. Her job is to open a second bottle of every wine that has not been awarded a gold or silver medal and look for bottle variation by comparing it to the one the judges tasted. Her work brings me great personal peace of mind. I cannot count the number

of times I have looked at a crib sheet following a blind tasting or been given the results at the end of a competition and wondered why specific wines did not perform better. I would often go back to such wines and retaste, only to think, "that's not right." If a wine has an obvious fault, or even if there is the slightest doubt expressed by just one of the judges, it is easy enough to call for another bottle, but what about the possibility of a subliminal fault? An undetectable trace of TCA can scalp the fruit, which under blind conditions would literally be taken as a lack of fruit, not a fault. The effect rather than the fault itself could account for such inconsistencies, but at the CSWWC, Orsi's role has eradicated that possibility. Now we know that if a wine does not perform well, it is because it was not good enough, and not because we encountered, but did not identify, bottle variation.

Our fifth year

A total of 116 Gold and 128 Silver medals were awarded at The Champagne & Sparkling Wine World Championships 2018. Each judge occasionally has his or her "personal Gold or Silver" wine, which he or she will defend to the hilt against other, less impressed colleagues, but every Gold and Silver medal awarded by the CSWWC has to be agreed by all three judges.

France came top of the leader board with 47 Gold medals in 2018, and it was followed by Italy on 31, due to a blistering performance by Trentodoc, which alone accounted for 20 Gold medals. Beyond the well-known classics, we were thrilled to award Gold medals to Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Hungary, and, for the first time, Romania. From the USA we had first-time entries from Virginia and Illinois. With the spread of technology and expertise, world-class sparkling wine can now be found in regions and countries where the fizz was undrinkable or non-existent ten years ago. While France and Italy remain the two most important countries in terms of the number of entries to our competition, entries from the USA, UK, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Hungary, and South Africa have increased by an average of 75 percent, thanks in no small way to the personal persuasion of Roger Jones, our new brand ambassador.



NATIONAL CHAMPION TROPHIES

BEST ARGENTINE SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS ARGENTINE BRUT VINTAGE: Chandon 2015 Barón B Brut Nature
The winner:

Chandon 2015 Barón B Brut Nature
Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (75cl, 12.1%); 40% Chardonnay, 60% Pinot Noir (6g RS)

Fresh, fine, and elegant aroma offset by charred characters and plenty of sweet fruitiness. Lovely toasty undertones. Nice intensity on the palate, lemony acidity and soft, textural elements that glide to a soft, silky finish.

BEST AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Chandon Non-Vintage Brut; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BRUT VINTAGE BLEND & BEST AUSTRALIAN MAGNUM: House of Arras 2002 E J Carr Late Disgorged Vintage in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BLANC DE BLANCS: Taltarni Vineyards 2013 Blanc de Blancs; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Nocton Vineyard Non-Vintage Sparkling Rosé; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN ROSÉ VINTAGE: Taltarni Vineyards 2013 Cuvée Rosé
The winner:

Chandon Non-Vintage Brut
Yarra Valley, Victoria, Australia (75cl, 12.5%); 58% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 5% Pinot Gris, 2% Meunier (8g RS)

A light but attractive complexity on the nose, this wine has a classic lean structure with beautiful fruit. Fresh, pure, and perky palate: creamy, round, long, and well-balanced.

BEST ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Cottonworth Non-Vintage Classic Cuvée; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH VINTAGE BRUT BLEND: Gusbourne Estate 2013 Brut Reserve; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH BLANC DE NOIRS: Denbies Wine Estate 2013 Cubitt Blanc de Noirs; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Plumpton Estate Non-Vintage Brut Rosé; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH ROSÉ VINTAGE: Camel Valley 2015 Pinot Noir Rosé Brut

The winner:

Camel Valley 2015 Pinot Noir Rosé Brut

Cornwall, England, UK (75cl, 12.5%);
100% Pinot Noir (10.8g RS)

Initially this is just a delight, with beautifully fresh, fruit-forward, raspberry and strawberry aromas, followed by crisp, juicy fruit of impressive linearity on the palate, but there is more to this than first impressions suggest. Fine, light notes of rosehip, rhubarb, and clove start to reveal its true complexity, and this is reinforced by the wine's fine structure, lots of fruit and biscuitiness. Wonderfully long finish. Excellent. What a masterpiece!

BEST FRENCH REGIONAL & NATIONAL SPARKLING WINES

BEST LOIRE VALLEY SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist:
BEST LOIRE VALLEY SPARKLING WINE & BEST IN CLASS LOIRE BRUT VINTAGE: Bouvet 2015 Trésor Saumur Brut Blanc
The winner:

Bouvet 2015 Trésor Saumur Brut Blanc

Saumur AOC, Loire Valley, France (75cl, 12.5%);
80% Chenin Blanc, 20% Chardonnay (12g RS)

Light and fresh, with wax and lanolin aromas, intense fruit, and an elegant kiss of oak on the palate. Nice complexity and a luxuriant mousse, with a very convincing finish.

BEST NON-DELUXE CHAMPAGNE

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND & BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE MAGNUM: Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: Moët & Chandon 2009 Grand Vintage; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Ruinart Non-Vintage Blanc de Blancs in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE: Maison Mumm 2012 RSRV Blanc de Blancs; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE NOIRS: Montaudon Non-Vintage Blanc de Noirs; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Thiénot Non-Vintage Cuvée Thiénot Rosé; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE ROSÉ VINTAGE: Louis Roederer 2010 Brut Rosé in Magnum
The winner:

Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum

Champagne, France (150cl, 12.5%);
40% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay, 20% Meunier (9g RS)

Beguiling from the start, this wine has delicate peach aromas with lovely toasty notes and lots of pure, cool fruit on the palate. It is so fresh, zesty, and energetic that its beautifully *à point* richness is refined and uplifting. Even if big and complex from substantial post-disgorgement aging, it has the structure to support it and a mouth-watering elegance that will plateau nicely for years to come. Mesmerizing!

BEST DELUXE CHAMPAGNE

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS DELUXE CHAMPAGNE BRUT MULTIVINTAGE BLEND: Moët & Chandon Non-Vintage MCIII in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS DELUXE CHAMPAGNE VINTAGE BLEND: Louis Roederer 2002 Cristal in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS DELUXE CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE BLANCS: Maison Perrier-Jouët 2004 Belle Epoque Blanc de Blancs in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS DELUXE CHAMPAGNE ROSÉ: Louis Roederer 2002 Cristal Rosé in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS SINGLE VINEYARD CHAMPAGNE: Pommery 2003 Clos Pompadour in Magnum
The winner:

Louis Roederer 2002 Cristal in Magnum

Champagne, France (150cl, 12.5%);
60% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay (9g RS)

Super-fragrant nose, with stunning toasty notes beginning to develop a smoky-toasty evolution. Bright, fresh fruit on the palate. So fresh and vivid, with a touch of flintiness, gorgeous finesse, and a long, linear, and luscious finish. Amazingly complex and seamless. Unbelievably youthful. Aging so glacially.

BEST CHAMPAGNE

The shortlist:
BEST NON-DELUXE CHAMPAGNE: Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum; BEST DELUXE CHAMPAGNE: Louis Roederer 2002 Cristal in Magnum
The winner:

Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum

See *Best Non-Deluxe Champagne*

BEST FRENCH SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist:
BEST LOIRE VALLEY SPARKLING WINE: Bouvet 2015 Trésor Saumur Brut Blanc; BEST CHAMPAGNE: Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum
The winner:

Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum

See *Best Non-Deluxe Champagne*

BEST HUNGARIAN SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS HUNGARIAN BRUT VINTAGE: Kreinbacher 2013 Prestige Brut in Magnum
The winner:

Kreinbacher 2013 Prestige Brut in Magnum

Somló, Hungary (150cl, 12.5%);
100% Furmint (8.5g RS)

Attractive pineapple fruit aroma with hints of developed toast and nuts. Clean, fresh, and creamy on the palate, with good weight and a soft brut finish. Shows promise.

BEST ITALIAN REGIONAL & NATIONAL SPARKLING WINES

BEST PROSECCO

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS PROSECCO BRUT NON-VINTAGE: Nino Franco Non-Vintage Rustico; BEST IN CLASS PROSECCO BRUT VINTAGE: Nino Franco 2017 Vigneto Della Riva di San Floriano; BEST IN CLASS PROSECCO VINTAGED EXTRA DRY & BEST VALUE PROSECCO: Paladin 2017 Prosecco Millesimato Extra Dry
The winner:

Nino Franco 2017 Vigneto Della Riva di San Floriano

Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG, Veneto, Italy (75cl, 12%);
100% Glera (9g RS)

Aromatic, herbal-scrub aromas with a hint of celery seed, mirrored on the palate, which also has extremely fresh, spicy, white fruits and super acidity. This is a classy Prosecco with a long, crisp brut finish.

BEST FRANCIACORTA

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BRUT VINTAGE BLEND, BEST IN CLASS LOW OR NO DOSAGE FRANCIACORTA, & BEST FRANCIACORTA MAGNUM: Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE: Ricci Curbastro 2010 Franciacorta Satèn Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Biondelli Non-Vintage Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Guido Berlucchi Non-Vintage '61 Rosé in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA ROSÉ VINTAGE: Fratelli Berlucchi 2014 Freccianera Rosa
The winner:

Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum

Franziacorta DOCG, Lombardy, Italy (150cl, 12.5%);
80% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir (0g RS)

Incredibly fresh and zesty for a seven-year-old Franciacorta. An overt, fruity aroma with notes of biscuity and yeasty-toasty complexity. Heaps of succulent fruit, good drive, and a long, firm brut finish.

BEST TRENTODOC

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BRUT BLEND & BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC MAGNUM: Cantina Aldeno 2014 Trentodoc Altinum Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Ferrari Non-Vintage Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE & BEST IN CLASS LOW OR NO DOSAGE TRENTODOC: Ferrari 2009 Riserva Lunelli Blanc de Blancs in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Rotari Non-Vintage Cuvée 28+ Rosé; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC ROSÉ VINTAGE: Rotari 2013 AlpeRegis Rosé in Magnum

The winner:

Cantina Aldeno 2014 Trentodoc Altinum Brut in Magnum

Trentodoc, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy (150cl, 12.3%);
90% Chardonnay, 10% Pinot Noir (3.7g RS)

Lovely aging nose with ripe tropical fruit and elegant, complexing notes of gunpowder and toast. A full-on palate of fresh, pristine fruit. Well-structured, full-flavored, and quite long. Fine salty minerality, particularly on the aftertaste.

BEST ITALIAN SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist: BEST PROSECCO: Nino Franco 2017 Vigneto Della Riva di San Floriano; BEST FRANCIACORTA: Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum; BEST TRENTODOC: Cantina Aldeno 2014 Trentodoc Altinum Brut in Magnum
The winner:

Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum

See *Best Franciacorta*

BEST NEW ZEALAND SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Hunter's Wines Non-Vintage MiruMiru; BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: Hunter's 2013 MiruMiru Reserve; BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND ROSÉ VINTAGE: Hunter's Wines Non-Vintage MiruMiru Rosé
The winner:

Hunter's 2013 MiruMiru Reserve

Blenheim, New Zealand (75cl, 13%);
62% Pinot Noir, 33% Chardonnay, 5% Meunier (6g RS)

Beautifully complex, creamy-fruity nose showing peach, pineapple, and yellow apple, with fleeting notes of toast, butter, and vanilla ice-cream! Well-balanced fruity palate: fresh and vibrant, with good length. Lovely high acids as well.

BEST SOUTH AFRICAN SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS SOUTH AFRICAN BRUT VINTAGE: Domaine des Dieux 2012 Claudia Brut; BEST IN CLASS SOUTH AFRICAN BLANC DE BLANCS: Cederberg 2013 Blanc de Blancs
The winner:

Domaine des Dieux 2012 Claudia Brut

Elgin WO, Cape South Coast, South Africa (75cl, 11.5%);
80% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir (7.2g RS)

Great gunpowdery-toastiness on the nose, then with smoky notes and pristine fruit on the palate. Lovely lean structure. Very long and linear. An elegant wine.

BEST US SPARKLING WINE

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA BRUT NON-VINTAGE: Chandon Non-Vintage Brut; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA BRUT VINTAGE: Caraccioli Cellars 2012 Brut Cuvée; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Roederer Estate Non-Vintage Rosé; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA ROSÉ VINTAGE: Caraccioli Cellars 2010 Brut Rosé; BEST IN CLASS NEW YORK STATE ROSÉ: Sparkling Pointe 2015 Topaz Impérial
The winner:

Roederer Estate Non-Vintage Rosé

Anderson Valley AVA, California, USA (75cl, 12.5%);
56% Pinot Noir, 44% Chardonnay (11g RS)

As the great Michael Broadbent MW used to say: an iron fist in a velvet glove! The pale-peach color is very demure and there is definitely some restraint on the nose, but the palate is a brazen display of naked power and vinosity. Heaps of fine, persistent Pinot-dominated fruit give this wine great depth, yet it is so juicy, succulent, and elegant. On the one hand it has impressive weight and shape, yet on the other it has exquisitely balanced acidity. Take a little time to ponder, and you will also find a very complex wine with notes of biscuits and brioche.



WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND

The shortlist: BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Chandon Non-Vintage Brut; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Cottonworth Non-Vintage Classic Cuvée; BEST IN CLASS BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS PROSECCO BRUT NON-VINTAGE: Nino Franco Non-Vintage Rustico; BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND BRUT NON-VINTAGE BLEND: Hunter's Wines Non-Vintage MiruMiru; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA BRUT NON-VINTAGE: Chandon Non-Vintage Brut
The winner:

Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum

See *Best Non-Deluxe Champagne*

WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC BRUT VINTAGE BLEND

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS ARGENTINE BRUT VINTAGE: Chandon 2015 Barón B Brut Nature; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: House of Arras 2002 E J Carr Late Disgorged Vintage in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH VINTAGE BRUT BLEND: Gusbourne Estate 2013 Brut Reserve; BEST IN CLASS LOIRE BRUT VINTAGE: Bouvet 2015 Trésor Saumur Brut Blanc; BEST IN CLASS BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: Moët & Chandon 2009 Grand Vintage; BEST IN CLASS PROSECCO BRUT VINTAGE: Nino Franco 2017 Vigneto Della Riva di San Floriano; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BRUT BLEND: Cantina Aldeno 2014 Trentodoc Altinum Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND BRUT VINTAGE BLEND: Hunter's 2013 MiruMiru Reserve; BEST IN CLASS SOUTH AFRICAN BRUT VINTAGE: Domaine des Dieux 2012 Claudia Brut; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA BRUT VINTAGE: Caraccioli Cellars 2012 Brut Cuvée
The winner:

Moët & Chandon 2009 Grand Vintage

Champagne, France (75cl, 12.5%);
50% Pinot Noir, 36% Chardonnay, 14% Meunier (5g RS)

My, my what a delicate nose, with lovely, gentle toasty and biscuity notes supporting such pristine and elegant fruit. The palate has weight, richness, and is quite substantial and complex, yet the precision of its fruit makes the style soft, fluffy, and super-easy. The epitome of 2009!

WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC BLANC DE BLANCS

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN BLANC DE BLANC: Taltarni Vineyards 2013 Blanc de Blancs; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Ruinart Non-vintage Blanc de Blancs in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE: Maison Mumm 2012 RSRV Blanc de Blancs; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE: Ricci Curbastro 2010 Franciacorta Satèn Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Biondelli Non-Vintage Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BLANC DE BLANCS NON-VINTAGE: Ferrari Non-Vintage Brut in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC BLANC DE BLANCS VINTAGE: Ferrari 2010 Perlé Blanc de Blancs in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS SOUTH AFRICAN BLANC DE BLANCS: Cederberg 2013 Blanc de Blancs
The winner:

Ruinart Non-Vintage Blanc de Blancs in Magnum

Champagne, France (150cl, 12.5%);
100% Chardonnay (9g RS)

A lovely, fresh, ripe expression of Chardonnay on the nose: pure and bright, with a touch of toast. Firm and focused on the palate, with creamy fruit of fine intensity and a long carry. One judge simply wrote, "I want a case of this!"

WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC ROSÉ

The shortlist:
BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Nocton Vineyard Non-Vintage Sparkling Rosé; BEST IN CLASS AUSTRALIAN ROSÉ VINTAGE: Taltarni Vineyards 2013 Cuvée Rosé; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Plumpton Estate Non-Vintage Brut Rosé; BEST IN CLASS ENGLISH ROSÉ VINTAGE: Camel Valley 2015 Pinot Noir Rosé Brut; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Thiénot Non-Vintage Cuvée Thiénot Rosé; BEST IN CLASS CHAMPAGNE ROSÉ VINTAGE: Louis Roederer 2010 Brut Rosé in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Guido Berlucchi Non-Vintage '61 Rosé in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS FRANCIACORTA ROSÉ VINTAGE: Fratelli Berlucchi 2014 Freccianera Rosa; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Rotari Non-Vintage Cuvée 28+ Rosé; BEST IN CLASS TRENTODOC ROSÉ VINTAGE: Rotari 2013 AlpeRegis Rosé in Magnum; BEST IN CLASS NEW ZEALAND ROSÉ VINTAGE: Hunter's Wines Non-Vintage MiruMiru Rosé; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE: Roederer Estate Non-Vintage Rosé; BEST IN CLASS CALIFORNIA ROSÉ VINTAGE: Caraccioli Cellars 2010 Brut Rosé; BEST IN CLASS NEW YORK STATE ROSÉ: Sparkling Pointe 2015 Topaz Impérial
The winner:

Louis Roederer 2010 Brut Rosé in Magnum

Champagne, France (150cl, 12.5%); 62% Pinot Noir, 38% Chardonnay (9g RS)

Very pale apricot-rose color. Soft, ripe-fruit aromas, with complexing notes of peach, apricot pie, toast, and marmalade. Delicious, elegant, bright-fruit flavors, streamlined with acidity. Long and linear.

WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC BRUT FROM A NON-TRADITIONAL GRAPE

The winner:

Kreinbacher 2013 Prestige Brut in Magnum

Produced exclusively from the Furmint grape. See Best Hungarian Sparkling Wine

WORLD CHAMPION RISING STAR

The winner:

Carassia from Carastelec in Romania

Until this year, with just one exception, a Future Release was not eligible for any other Best in Class or Trophy because the wine we taste might not be the final commercial disgorgement or dosage and a sparkling wine can easily be messed up at disgorgement. The sole exception was the trophy for a Classic Brut Style from a Non-Traditional Grape because even a pre-release sample has already demonstrated its potential, whether or not it is messed up at disgorgement. From this year on, however, there is another exception: Rising Star, because it is not for a specific wine and it, too, has shown the potential. If this trophy had existed earlier, Kreinbacher from Hungary would have been

among its first recipients, but Kreinbacher has become more award-winning than a potential Rising Star. However, both Carassia and Kreinbacher illustrate the same sort of boutique sparkling-wine producer that is being established all over the world, not just in the most classic or obvious locations. We tasted Carassia Blanc de Blancs for the first time last year. It was a pure 2014, but sold without vintage and won a Silver. The same wine was entered this year and again won a Silver, but they also entered their 2015 (again without vintage), but as a Future Release and it was in a different league, easily winning a Gold. As this was our very first Rising Star trophy, we could not make a hasty judgment, thus George Markus, our permanent reserve judge, was dispatched to Romania for a visit. Suitably impressed, particularly by its advanced oxidative handling, Carassia has become the first recipient of this new trophy and we look forward to tasting what we hope will be award-winning wines in the coming years.

WORLD CHAMPION LIBRARY VINTAGE

The shortlist:
Ruinart 1998 Dom Ruinart Blanc de Blancs; Champagne Rare 1998 in Magnum
The winner:

Champagne Rare 1998 in Magnum

Champagne, France (75cl, 12%); 70% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay (9.5g RS)

Smoky nose: bonfire as well as gunpowder. Also pencil-shavings and lovely, mellowing toasty-vanilla and biscuity notes. Simply gorgeous. Beautiful flavor, excellent weight. Not big, but superbly long and lingering, with fine balance. This is an excellent wine! Superb!



CHAIRMAN'S TROPHY

The winner:

Dominique Demarville

Normally the Chairman's Trophy goes to a wine. When I established this competition, I gave myself no additional power when deciding the medals, best in class or any of the regular trophies. There is no point, other than vanity or drama, in having an even number of judges and giving a chairman the casting vote, but I did pinch an idea for myself from the Australian

The reason that Dominique Demarville is this year's recipient of the Chairman's Trophy is in recognition of the difference he has made at Veuve Clicquot at a time of great and unpredictable change in Champagne

Wine Show system: the so-called Chairman's Trophy. I usually award it to a specific wine for a reason I explain at the time, but this year I have decided to honor an individual; and the reason that Dominique Demarville is this year's recipient of the Chairman's Trophy is in recognition of the difference he has made at Veuve Clicquot at a time of great and unpredictable change in Champagne.

This change comes from two different sources: one organic, the other chaotic. The organic change is part of the natural cycle of retiring and replacing chefs de caves. Every so often this process seems to peak and we are currently going through such a phase at the moment. The chaotic change is one that everybody is talking about: climate change. For any new chef de caves at a successful Champagne house, the best that can be asked is often that his or her arrival goes unnoticed in the bottles produced. To combat climate change, however, pro-active steps have to be taken, and these will not go unnoticed. The most profound and long-term action that must be taken is not in the hands of individual producers, but under the control of the CIVC, which must turn on its head the parameters of its clonal research program and look for much later-ripening Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Meunier vines. Meanwhile, producers have to work with the vines that are in the ground now, not what might be growing in the future, and most obviously what they need most is more reserve wines and better reserve wines. They need these reserves to balance the peaks and troughs of harvests (which have increased due to extremes of climate). They also need to be more willing to prevent malolactic (either entirely or in part, to offset lower acidity), and to seek ways to replace the creaminess lost by decreasing malolactic.

Demarville has excelled in all three respects by reducing the number of Vintages that Veuve Clicquot will release to just three in ten (ostensibly to make Vintage Champagne special again, but also in truth to give Yellow Label Non-Vintage blends access the very best wines that would otherwise have been reserved for the Vintage) and, since 2008, by fermenting a small but growing proportion of both Vintage and Non-Vintage wines in oak for the first time since 1961 (the micro-oxygenation of which produces a textural enhancement that is not dissimilar to the creaminess created by an aromatically low-key malolactic, plus, of course, the creaminess of the oak itself). Demarville has thus not gone unnoticed. He has made a difference, and for that he deserves the Chairman's Trophy.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

George Markus and I were discussing the number of sparkling winemakers who had won awards at the CSWWC and just retired or were shortly due to retire, when he suddenly asked whether they should be recognized—and from this the idea of the CSWWC Lifetime Achievement Awards evolved. Because we have only just begun these awards, we have looked back over the past five years and found nine hugely deserving recipients. Due to circumstance, they happen to be primarily Champagne chefs de caves, but the CSWWC Lifetime Achievement Award is of course open to winemakers from any region who have made an exceptional contribution to the sparkling-wine world, and its receipt does not necessarily indicate the end or imminent end of a career!

Thierry Roset (1959–2014)

An intensely private man whose greatest achievement was to reinvent Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve from 60 crus rather than 120 and retain the essence of what many believe to be the most consistent, high-quality Non-Vintage Champagne on the market. See the obituary from The World of Fine Wine below.

Michel Salgues (1947–2017)

One of only a handful of genuinely world-class sparkling-wine consultants, Michel Salgues famously established Roederer Estate in the Anderson Valley, guided Caraccioli Cellars to no fewer than 11 Gold medals, 11 Silvers, 7 Best in Class, and 2 Trophies, and was determined to do the same for the as yet unlaunched Hundred Hills Vineyard near Henley-on-Thames. See the obituary from The World of Fine Wine below.

Thierry Gasco

The chef de caves of Pommery for 25 years, Thierry Gasco retired in 2017. The essence of his true skill can be understood through magnums of Brut Royale and Clos Pompadour, which alone have won him 5 Gold medals, 2 Silvers, 5 Best in Class, and 2 Trophies.

Jean-Paul Gandon

The chef de caves of Lanson for 29 years, Jean-Paul Gandon retired in 2015, after serving under four different owners, two of whom were very difficult indeed. His greatest achievement was to maintain the style and quality of Lanson without its 208ha (514 acres) of vineyards, which were lost during a three-month asset-stripping ownership between December 1990 and February 1991.

Hervé Deschamps

The chef de caves of Perrier-Jouët for 25 years, Hervé Deschamps is due to retire in the near future, after working with his replacement. His blending skills are legendary and, if the rumors are true, some might even say mystical, behind locked doors, winning him 9 Gold medals, 6 Silvers, 2 Best in Class, and 1 Trophy.

Richard Geoffroy

The chef de caves of Dom Pérignon for 28 years and Director of Oenology for the whole kit and caboodle of Moët & Chandon globally since

2005, Richard Geoffroy retires at the end of 2018. His greatest achievements include putting a human face on the largest, most inscrutable institution in Champagne; transforming the image of the chef de caves into an A-list superstar; and transmuting Dom Pérignon into an immensely profitable, iconic Champagne.

Loïc Dupont

The chef de caves of Taittinger for 18 years, Loïc Dupont retired in May after almost 35 years of service. Renowned for preferring the darkness of his cellars to the bright lights of chef de caves stardom, he was rarely encountered outside the confines of Taittinger unless it was in black leather astride a powerful motorbike. He has left his mark through some of the greatest ever vintages of Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs.

François Domi

The chef de caves of Billecart-Salmon for 33 years before he retired earlier this year, François Domi's most important achievement was the creation of a new, single-vineyard Champagne, Le Clos Saint-Hilaire, but his greatest single wine is still the 1990 Grande Cuvée en magnum.

Ed Carr

Born in England and not retired or due to retire by any stretch of the imagination, Ed Carr is Group Sparkling Winemaker for Accolade Wines Australia, the company for which, under its many guises and ownerships, he has been the lead sparkling winemaker for more than 30 years. Today he is synonymous with Accolade's House of Arras super-premium brand, but over his entire career and all brands, Ed Carr has won more medals and trophies than any other sparkling winemaker in the world. His passion for demonstrating that freshness, complexity, and maturity do not have to be mutually exclusive should be an inspiration to everyone.



SPARKLING WINE PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

This is not awarded according to any kind of subjective vote, as can happen in other wine competitions, but is based simply on the number of Gold medals won: the producer with most gets the trophy.

The shortlist: FRANCE: Louis Roederer (Champagne); FRANCE: Piper-Heidsieck (Champagne); ITALY: Ferrari Lunelli (Trentodoc); ITALY: Rotari (Trentodoc)

The chef de caves of Taittinger for 18 years, Loïc Dupont has left his mark through some of the greatest ever vintages of Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs

The winner:

Louis Roederer

When Ferrari entered nine wines in 2015 and won an astonishing nine Gold medals, I thought it so unlikely that such a feat could be repeated that I promised to eat my hat if it ever was. Roederer took this as a challenge and entered ten wines and won ten gold medals the following year. I ate the hat (it's on YouTube). Last year it was Ferrari again, but with no fewer than 11 Gold medals, and this year Roederer won 11 Gold medals. From this year, I am also including the runners-up, so we can see who else was in the running, how close they were, and keep an eye on how they do in the future: Ferrari (9 Golds), Rotari (7 Golds), and Piper-Heidsieck (5 Golds).



SUPREME WORLD CHAMPION

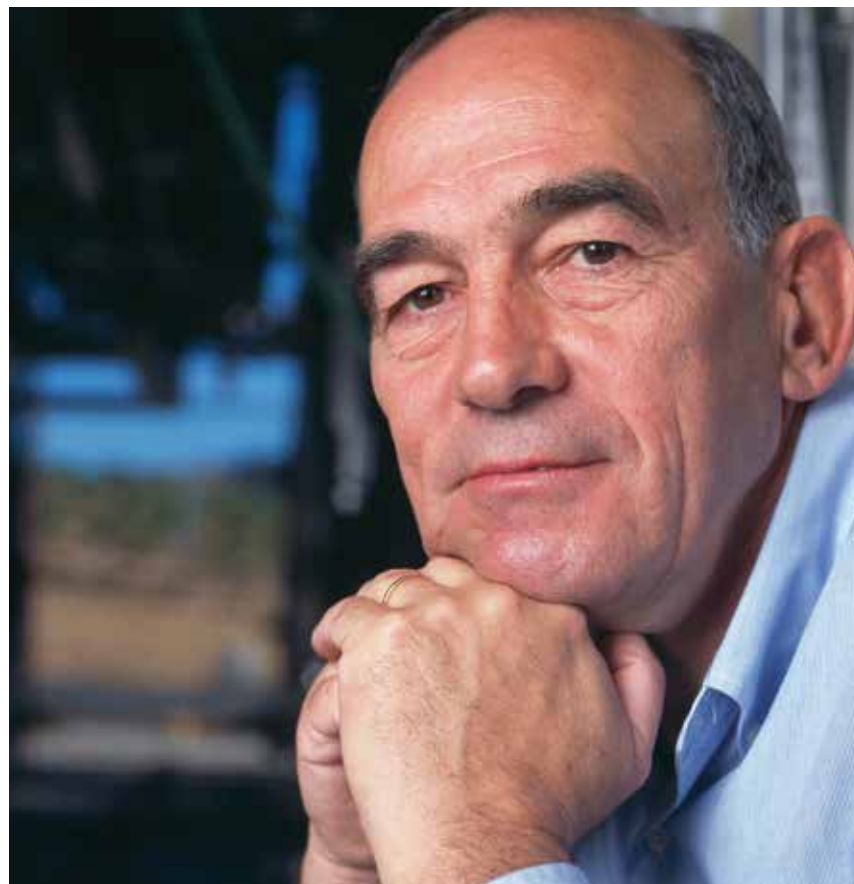
The shortlist: BEST ARGENTINE SPARKLING WINE: Chandon 2015 Barón B Brut Nature; BEST AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINE: Chandon Non-Vintage Brut; BEST FRENCH SPARKLING WINE: Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum; BEST HUNGARIAN SPARKLING WINE: Kreinbacher 2013 Prestige Brut in Magnum; BEST ITALIAN SPARKLING WINE: Guido Berlucchi 2011 '61 Nature in Magnum; BEST NEW ZEALAND SPARKLING WINE: Hunter's 2013 MiruMiru Reserve; BEST SOUTH AFRICAN SPARKLING WINE: Domaine des Dieux 2012 Claudia Brut; BEST US SPARKLING WINE: Roederer Estate Non-Vintage Rosé
The winner:

Louis Roederer Non-Vintage Brut Premier in Magnum

See Best Non-Deluxe Champagne

The beautiful mind of Michel Salgues (1947–2017)

As chief winemaker at Roederer Estate in Anderson Valley, and then as a much-respected sparkling-wine consultant, the Frenchman displayed a rare blend of intelligence and humility. Tom Stevenson remembers a dear friend



At 4am on Sunday, October 1, 2017, a legendary figure in the sparkling-wine world passed away at Val d'Aurelle hospital in Montpellier. Michel Salgues established Roederer Estate in the Anderson Valley, where he produced the first truly world-class sparkling wine, comparable in quality not merely to Champagne but to an exceptionally fine Champagne. It was also at Roederer Estate that Michel became the first mentor to fellow Ardennais Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon. Michel was instrumental in maneuvering

young Jean-Baptiste to take over as *chef de cave* at Louis Roederer in Reims, where he has since established himself as one of Champagne's most gifted winemakers. After nearly 20 years as vice president and head winemaker at Roederer Estate, Michel retired and immediately became one of the most sought-after sparkling-wine consultants in the world.

I am privileged not only to have met Michel Salgues but also to have known him as a very dear friend for more than 30 years. I have come across

many bright people in my working life but none who has displayed such an inspiring combination of intelligence and humility. Michel's greatest asset was, without doubt, his ability to listen intently. When he asked a question, he would cock his head very slightly and turn on a kindly smile. He made the recipient of that smile aware that he would be clinging on to every word of his or her answer. He was one of life's natural givers.

A brilliant career and rich legacy

Michel was born on April 30, 1947, at Vouziers, 30 miles (48km) northeast of Reims, but spent most of his early childhood at Machault, 50 miles (80km) southeast of Paris, where his parents continued to live until they passed away some ten years ago. He was the fourth of six boys (the others being René, Henri, Jean, Laurent, and Pierre), and his penchant for international travel in later life can be traced back to the wanderlust nature of his formative years. Having attended preschool and primary school up to the second grade in Machault, he was sent to live with his grandparents in Noyon (in the Oise

Michel Salgues established Roederer Estate, where he produced the first world-class sparkling wine, comparable in quality not merely to Champagne but to an exceptionally fine Champagne

département), where he spent two years at the College Paul Bert. Michel then moved to Reims, where he attended the Lycée de Reims for six years before moving to Paris to finish his general education at the Lycée Chaptal.

He graduated in agricultural engineering and oenology from SupAgro Montpellier in 1969 and one year later gained a master's in agricultural engineering from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. From 1972 until 1985, Michel was resident associate professor at the Department of Enology for Inra-SupAgro Montpellier. During a sabbatical year at UC Davis in 1983, he gained a master's in food sciences. His research on enzymatic oxidation of phenols at Montpellier led to his place on Dr Singleton's team at UC Davis, which resulted in the discovery of a hitherto unknown major path of white juice oxidation. In 1986 he gained a PhD in food sciences from SupAgro Montpellier.

Michel so enjoyed his sabbatical in California that he was easily persuaded by Jean-Claude Rouzaud to establish Roederer Estate in the Anderson Valley. "Given my inclination to play the Franco-French card," Jean-Claude told me, "I did not think for a single second that I should hire an American winemaker. I was out to make a statement, and Michel's credentials were perfect. To be absolutely honest, before coming to see me, he had an image of Roederer Estate that so resonated with my vision that he almost begged me to let him take the lead. So I did, and in the end Michel was probably more captivated by our Anderson Valley project than I was!"

Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, who spent one year at Roederer Estate with Michel, has "lots of memories, and they are all good. What a passionate teacher he was! I remember asking him some theoretical questions about the metabolism of yeast and sulfur, and he answered not only from the practical side but also drew at high speed formulae showing all the enzymatic transformations! Our friendship was strong. Even in his recent work as a consultant, he would often call me. In our last conversations, during his final phase of illness, we developed a new relationship that was deeper and probably more philosophical. It was probably Michel's way of saying,

Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon has "lots of memories, and they are all good. What a passionate teacher he was! In our last conversations, we developed a deeper relationship. It was probably Michel's way of saying, *Go on, do your best, and do it passionately. I remain with you*"

Go on, do your best, and do it passionately. I remain with you."

Michel published more than 25 scientific and technical papers and developed and patented a Champagne Pressure Gauge and automatic equipment for measuring grape rot.

His consultancies included the award-winning sparkling wines of Caraccioli Winery in the Santa Lucia Highland AVA of California (2006–17); Arcadia Vineyards Family Vineyards in Turkey (2006–17); Bodegas Pomar in Venezuela (2004–10); and Hundred Hills Vineyards at Pishill, near Henley-on-Thames, in the UK (2012–17), which is where I saw him last, walking through the vineyards together on a bright sunny day in June, and that is as good a last memory as anyone could possibly hope for.

Modest, multifaceted, passionate

Michel Salgues was more than the sum of his parts, and although he had a burning passion to make the most elegant sparkling wines possible, he was not completely obsessed by it or even by wine in general. His beautifully rational mind was multifaceted, and he possessed more hobbies than you could shake a stick at. His enthusiasm for astronomy was such that he had been building his own telescope for the past ten years. He was also a mushroom hunter extraordinaire and was very much into history, both ancient and modern, with European and Middle Eastern history his favorites. He spent a lot of time rummaging around used bookshops. He collected books and read a lot. He read in German, as well as in French and in English, and was

especially fond of Goethe but would read anything from Kurt Vonnegut to Noam Chomsky and everything beyond and between. He was particularly fond of 20th-century art and collected books on art, including any he could find about his father-in-law, who was an artist. He did not believe in any deity, but he read about religion—from the history of the Mormon Church, to the origins of Islam. And of course he devoured everything about science. He was affectionately known by Camilo, the husband of Michel's daughter Emmanuelle, as The Science Channel. Emmanuelle told me, "You could call him day or night with questions regarding anything from flocculation, to the chemical compounds found in baby oil, and he would know the answer. He was extremely knowledgeable, but he was very humble and always so keen to learn new things. When I was working on my PhD, he learned cuneiform numbers and read up on Babylonian mathematics in order to help me with the calculations and agricultural concepts found in my cuneiform texts!"

Sadly and rather suddenly, Michel was diagnosed with cancer in November 2016, and underwent six months of chemotherapy in Montpellier, after which his oncologist gave him the all-clear. But the disease returned within just two months, and he died before he was able to start another course of chemotherapy. Michel is survived by his wife Sylvie (who has returned to Montpellier), his son Mathieu (46, Alameda), and his daughters Anne (45, Paris) and Emmanuelle (40, Germany). Michel had three grandchildren: Diego and Téo by his son Mathieu, and Zélie by his youngest daughter Emmanuelle, who was so happy her father lived long enough to enjoy the first three and a half months of Zélie's life. Michel is also survived by all of his brothers except Pierre, who passed away several years ago.

Michel Salgues was more than the sum of his parts, and although he had a burning passion to make the most elegant sparkling wines possible, he was not completely obsessed by it

A humble, gentle giant of Champagne: Thierry Roset (1959–2014)

One of Champagne's greatest contemporary winemakers, the *chef de cave* of Charles Heidsieck leaves behind an impressive legacy

Champagne Charles Heidsieck has been lucky to have three of Champagne's most gifted winemakers working as its *chef de cave* during its return to the front rank of *grandes marques* over the past 30 years.

Daniel Thibault—appointed *chef de cave* at Charles Heidsieck when he was just 29 years old, and described by Michael Edwards in *The Finest Wines of Champagne* as a “restless perfectionist”—was the first of this impressive lineage, and he did much to establish the brand's Non-Vintage cuvée as one of the most consistently excellent on the market, as well as overseeing the development of the highly regarded blanc de blancs prestige cuvée, Blanc des Millénaires.

Thibault was succeeded by his former assistant Régis Camus, a quieter but no less skilled presence in the Heidsieck cellars, who built on Thibault's work at both Charles and Piper-Heidsieck, where he was supported by the third of Heidsieck's contemporary greats, Thierry Roset. Roset assumed creative control as *chef de cave* of Charles Heidsieck in 2012, when Camus became the P&C Heidsieck group's director of winemaking, but his influence behind the scenes had been an open secret to Champagne insiders for many years before.

That the three men were by all accounts close friends, as well as colleagues—Roset had initially begun his career at Heidsieck as a trainee under Thibault in 1985, before joining the company as Thibault's assistant in 1988—goes a long way toward explaining the seamless transition in the company's cellars during their collective time at the helm.

But it also contributes to the immense sadness that the house is currently feeling after the recent news that Roset, like Thibault before him, has died while still in the prime of life.

Roset was just 55 years old when he collapsed and died suddenly in October 2014, by terrible coincidence at the same age that Thibault succumbed to cancer in 2002.

Like Thibault—though very different in character—Roset was a much-admired and loved figure in the region, described in a statement from Charles Heidsieck's UK importer Liberty Wines as “a gentle, kind, and humble person who shared his wisdom generously and with great good humor.”

After starting out as Thibault's assistant, Roset spent his career at the very heart of the Heidsieck operation, managing the cellar, riddling, and disgorgement for all Piper- and Charles Heidsieck wines between 1992 and 2002, a period when he was also a key member of the blending and tasting committee.

In 2003, Roset joined Camus's winemaking team full time, effectively as his right-hand man but with a focus on Charles Heidsieck, where he oversaw the relaunch of Charles Heidsieck, with a much-revised blend and a new crayères-inspired bottle shape. After becoming the Charles Heidsieck *chef de cave* in 2012, he established his reputation as one of Champagne's best winemakers, earning the title of Sparkling Winemaker of the Year at the International Wine Challenge earlier in 2014.

It will be of little consolation to his family, friends, and colleagues, but as the Liberty statement goes on to say, Roset at least “had the opportunity to taste and appreciate the 2014 wines before his untimely departure and has left us with an early judgment of his favorite crus for the next blending.”

“With Thierry firmly in their minds and hearts,” the statement continues, “the winemaking team under Régis Camus will ensure that the unique style of the Charles Heidsieck wines, so loved and respected by so many, lives on.”

Roset is survived by his wife Laurence and his three sons, Paul, Tom-Louis, and Martin-Pierre.

Photography courtesy of Charles Heidsieck



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