

CHAMPAGNE



Champagne Salon, AOC Champagne Grand Cru, Effervescent Brut, 2004

Salon 2004, the tranquil power of a dormant volcano

PRESENTATION

Salon is unique. The fruit of an ambitious idea, of a desire to go beyond standard practice and push the boundaries of Champagne. So it was that in the early 1900s, Eugène-Aimé Salon, a man of aesthetic leanings with an obsession for champagne, conceived this champagne from a single vintage, from a single cru in the heart of the Côte des Blancs, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, and from a single grape variety, chardonnay. The miracle of this pioneering Blanc de blancs marked the start of many other miracles, for a bottle of Champagne Salon is a masterpiece of complexity, created for pleasure, pure and simple.

THE VINTAGE

The 2004 growing season got off to a slow start in Champagne, even in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, the legendary terroir of the Côte des Blancs, with its unrivalled balance between sugar and acidity. Despite this, the crop looked so abundant, that the decision was taken in July to perform a 'green harvest' (thin the crop) to ensure optimal fruit concentration. Cool, rainy conditions during August saw the grapes struggle to ripen. Finally however, on the 2nd September and up until autumnal conditions arrived on 23rd and harvest began, the weather set fair. Glorious sunshine brought the crop – plentiful yet carefully contained – safely and surely to a level of ripeness that was simply inconceivable, together with extraordinary acidity. This was an extraordinary show of power from deep inside the vines, an explosion of quality that had had been building quietly for an entire year, deep within the earth, in the vines themselves, the product of the soil, the wind, the rain, the sun, until finally, surpassing all our hopes, this champagne surged forth: like a serene volcano, it simmered quietly before unleashing its true nature, as if by surprise, with the Salon 2004 vintage.

VARIETALS

Chardonnay 100%

SERVING

Taste it and drink it just cool, between 13 and 15 degrees. Be ravished.

TASTING

It is all there in the glass, the enticing promise that is Salon 2004: the pale colour flashing with green, the tiny bubbles rising dynamically on their gossamer thread, hallmarks of the vintage. Clean and lively on the attack, the wine's intense freshness and minerality deliver on its aromatic promise – an impressive nose with notes of minerals, gunflint, stones, smoked tea, just a touch of mint. Redolent of the ocean with its iodine, seaweed tang, it conjures up images of basalt cliffs, a Giant's Causeway thrown up by ancient volcanic eruptions, beaten smooth by the incessant pounding of the waves. Time has done its work. Through the medium of the vine, sun, soil, water and air have worked their alchemy to forge this Salon 2004, carrying the promise of a great future, with inimitable poise.

Taut and edgy in the mouth, the wine is all purity and fine acidity. The magnificent salinity of this great white wine, still in its first flush of youth, offers a suitable foil to the ripe chardonnay fruit, emerging gently but surely, with hints of brioche, warm bread and fresh yeast characters tiptoeing in behind. The wine becomes rounder as it airs in the glass, revealing a beautiful vinosity, the curve counter-balancing its acidity to perfection. And on the finish, the merest hint of bitterness, the signature of so many truly great wines.

FOOD PAIRINGS

From the pared-down simplicity of shellfish, country bread, and salted butter to the most sophisticated turbot in a cream oyster sauce highlighting the wine's inherent nuttiness; and from a simple lobster with Belon oysters to recipes with Japanese seaweed, all will make an elegant

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partner for Salon 2004, just as, by welcome contrast, the rich, noble fat of a great Parma or Iberico ham will lift it to new heights.

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