

CHAMPAGNE 2025 TASTING REPORT

Champagne's 'Magic Window' to a Fresh Future

It was Bastille Day, France's national holiday celebrating the start of the French Revolution, and the main street of the Champagne city of Epernay, Avenue de Champagne, was filled with several hundred people dressed in white, holding Champagne flutes and drinking from late afternoon until the early hours of the following morning.

It's a good time to be celebrating with a glass of Champagne. Regardless of the downturn in the wine market, the quality of wines from the region is higher than ever, and our tastings of hundreds of bottles of Champagne alongside three dozen winery visits in mid-July highlighted this. With two superb vintages coming to the market – 2018 and 2019 – there's no shortage of great bottles. In total this year, we rated nearly 1,000 Champagnes, our largest amount ever.



James revels in two bottles of 1911 Pol Roger Champagne, which spent decades in cold chalk cellars of the house in the town of Epernay.

We were left speechless by the longevity and incredible complexity of many more Champagnes – some late-disgorged – that we tasted on our trip, including a 1911 Champagne from Pol Roger that remarkably was in perfect condition both in regular-bottle and half-bottle format. These wines have not been released but were shared over a special dinner.

Also check out the flinty, smoky [Pol Roger Champagne Blanc de Blancs Vintothèque 2002](#), the 1,000-bottle release of [De Venoge Champagne Louis XV Brut Réserve 1996](#) and the other Bollinger R.D. Champagnes that James tasted – the [2008](#), [1988](#) and [1976](#) are all among our top 15 wines.

92

Pol Roger Brut Réserve

Bread crust, sliced apples, citrus and some raspberries on the nose of this refreshing Champagne. Crisp on the palate, with fine bubbles and a tight, clean finish. A third each of pinot noir, meunier and chardonnay. Based on the 2021 vintage. Disgorged October 2024. 8g/L dosage. Drink now.



94

Pol Roger Brut Vintage 2018

I like the berry fruit aromas mingling with bread crust, grapefruit and lemon pastries. It's lively on the palate, with excellent structure and a bright wild-berry character. Clean and nicely focused. 60% pinot noir and 40% chardonnay. Disgorged 2024. Drink or hold.



95

Pol Roger Brut Rosé 2018

This has fragrant aromas of strawberries, hibiscus, blood oranges and a hint of mint. Delightfully bright, concentrated and fruit-driven, with a medium body, tight bubbles and a long, mouthwatering and delicious finish. Dry. Pinot noir and chardonnay plus 16% red wine. Drink or hold.



95

Pol Roger Blanc de Blancs 2016

Very cool and bright, this shows aromas of grapefruit, candied lemons, sliced pears and fresh croissants. It's racy on the palate, with lively acidity and very fresh citrus fruit flavors. Vivid, but also silky in texture. Grand cru chardonnay from Cote des Blancs. Disgorged 2024. Drink now or hold.



96

Pol Roger Sir Winston Churchill 2018

This has complex aromas of croissant, acacia flowers, raw walnuts, flint and oyster shells. Very sleek, tight and structured on the palate, showing elegance and chalky minerality underneath. Seamless, classy finish with a deliciously dry, lightly phenolic citrus pith character coming through. Grand cru pinot noir with some chardonnay. Disgorged June 2024. Drink now or hold.



98

Pol Roger Brut Vintage Vinothèque 2004

Attractive brioche, white chocolate, walnut, salted caramel and salted pineapple aromas waft from the glass. So salty, layered and delicious, with honeyed and caramel-like decadence, but it's delicate and very fresh, too. Remains concentrated throughout. Keeps going. Disgorged 2015. Drink or hold.



99

Pol Roger Blanc de Blancs Vinothèque 2002

Fantastic aromas of smoke, flint, nectarines, white sesame seeds, cashews and grapefruit. Some persimmons and saffron, too. Flinty, salty and spicy, with intensity and vivacity. Tight bubbles. It's still incredibly fresh and bright, and spicy at the end. You can just keep drinking this. Disgorged 2013. Drink or hold.



97

Pol Roger Sir Winston Churchill Vinothèque 2002

This rich, complex Champagne shows grilled brioche, roasted walnuts, honeycomb, creme brulee and white chocolate on the nose, followed by a creamy and broad palate with a wonderful toasty brioche character that's almost buttery. Very generous and attractive. Disgorged January 2015. Drink or hold.

