

Champagne
BRUNO PAILLARD
Reims-France

Old Dégorgements Collection

Back labels indicating disgorgement date



Witness glasses



Tulip shaped glasses



«Old Dégorgements Collection»

The «small but prestigious young champagne house»*, Bruno PAILLARD, has always been very keen to show that 'well born' and 'well raised' champagnes could age wonderfully.

Since 1985 the house has indicated the disgorgement** date of the wines on every single bottle. Wine amateurs know that after this process of disgorgement the evolution of the wine changes in style to go through 5 or 6 different «ages» more or less complementary, leading to a gain in complexity: **firstly fruit dominated**, then by **flowers, spices, toasted aromas**, and finally **candied fruit** and **roasted notes**.

For the first time wine amateurs will be able to taste this evolution with the creation of two exclusive cases available in very limited quantities: the first case containing a bottle of Brut Première Cuvée disgorged 6 months previously, one bottle disgorged three years previously and one bottle disgorged six years previously; the second case containing five bottles in total, also including one eight years old disgorgement and one ten years old disgorgement – intervals in time which although relatively small, will still allow the taster a unique and exciting insight into the subject.

A few words of advice:

Use a tulip shaped tasting glass. Serve at a cold but not chilled temperature (9-10°C). The tasting order should follow from the most recent to the oldest disgorgement date, clearly indicated on the back label. This case will allow for a tasting group of up to 12 people. Keep a separate glass with a sample from each bottle to gauge the development of the wine, making sure they are kept in the correct tasting order.

* Pocket Wine Guide, Hugh Johnson

** Dégorgement : operation which consists - after several years of ageing - in extracting the sediment which was formed during the bottle fermentation. At this stage, the «dosage» is added and the final cork is sealed.

«What is Dégorgement?»

Bruno PAILLARD champagnes mature in the cellars for an average of three years for the multi vintage wines and between seven and twelve years for the single vintage wines. The deposit that forms as a result of the fermentation in bottle, on which the wine has matured and benefitted from the **autolysis of the yeast cells***, must now be removed. If this deposit were left in the bottle, the resulting wine would be cloudy, rather than crystal clear, when served...

In order to remove the deposit, one first has to coax it to the neck of the bottle. This process, which can take anything from eight days to five weeks, is called **remuage**. The bottles are placed in wooden racks, fashioned in such a way that they can be gradually moved every day by hand – both rotated and tipped at the same time, to allow the deposit to slide towards the neck of the bottle. Remuage can also be done with the help of machines called gyropallets which replicate the same hand movements but with a greater level of precision.

When the bottle is lying in a vertical position – head first – the deposit is therefore concentrated against the cork, just a few millimetres thick. It can now be removed – a process called **disgorgement**.

*Yeast autolysis: autolysis is the destruction of tissue by its own enzymes. In oenology, this is a biochemical phenomenon which takes place during the ageing of a wine on its lees, after the bottle fermentation and the death of the yeast cells: the latter decompose, freeing substances which lend a fatness and roundness to champagne.

Deposit concentrated near the cork after remuage



Remuage by gyropallets



«How does *dégorgement* take place?»

Disgorgement in itself takes only a few seconds, and was originally done «à la volée»: the cellar worker would open the bottle head down, and with a quick movement stand the bottle upright while controlling with his thumb the amount of wine that escaped with the deposit. The wine left in the bottle would be completely clear. Nowadays, this process is mechanised, allowing for complete consistency from one bottle to the next and all within perfectly hygienic conditions.

The next step is the **dosage**: one or two centilitres of wine will have been lost during the disgorgement and will therefore be replaced by some reserve wine which may contain a small amount of cane sugar. This addition is called the **liqueur d'expédition**. The sugar content in this liqueur is zero for the 'non-dosage, brut zero' champagnes and can be as much as 15 grams per litre for 'brut' champagnes, while the 'extra dry' are sweeter, and the secs and demi-secs are even sweeter still.

Maison Bruno PAILLARD only produces brut champagnes which have particularly low residual sugar levels – between 4 and 7.5 grams per litre. This contributes greatly to the purity of style that is the hallmark of the House.

When the disgorgement process is complete, the cork and wire cage are immediately added. At Bruno PAILLARD every bottle then returns to the cellars for a further ageing period of between six to eighteen months.

«A la volée» disgorgement



Visual verification after disgorgement, before extra rest in the cellar



« *Is there a life after dégorgement?* »

— *Yes, but there has to be a convalescing period first.*

There are numerous side effects on the wine as a result of disgorgement. At the moment of disgorgement, the wine undergoes a sort of trauma, as would a patient who undergoes a medical operation. As a matter of fact, in the language of cellarworkers, 'to disgorge' is expressed by using the word 'to operate'. As a consequence, the first requirement of the wine after disgorgement is **convalescence**. As with a surgical operation, **this convalescence should be longer for an older subject than for a younger one**. It is this experience that leads us at Bruno PAILLARD to give a minimum of four to six months of rest after disgorgement to our Brut Première Cuvée and our Rose Premier Cuvée, which are relatively youthful wines; six-eight months for the Blanc de Blancs Reserve Privée Grand Cru and the vintage wines, and up to eighteen months for the Nec Plus Ultra. During this convalescence, the wine will recover a balance between freshness and softness of the dosage, to make a perfect marriage.

— *And after? After, there are five or six different lives!*

After this period of rebalance, the wine will continue on its journey. Its evolution will depend on a combination of several factors. Firstly the **natural tendencies of the grape varieties** – even if they vary considerably depending on the crus of our cool, northern Champagne – are well known: the **Chardonnay** grape high in acidity, with citrus notes – lime and white flowers gains notes of grapefruit, orange and candied peel with age. The **Pinot Noir** grape has typical notes of red berries in the first flush of youth – strawberry, raspberry, redcurrant, cherry - but evolves towards black fruits – blackberries and blackcurrants – and spicy notes with age. **Pinot Meunier**, generally lower in acidity than the first two varieties, will evolve from notes of soft, sweet fruit – pear, banana, lychee – towards notes of patisserie, candied fruit and even fig. Apart from varietal evolution, which of course will be to a lesser or greater extent depending on their percentage in the blend, two other factors resulting from the disgorging process play an essential role....

« Lets get technical »

Micro-oxidation, a very slow and perfectly natural phenomenon, will now occur. In fact, before the disgorgement there would have been no oxygen in the bottle as it would have all been used up during the fermentation and transformed into carbonic gas: the same gas which is released in the form of tiny bubbles upon the popping of the cork...But at the moment of disgorging, the opening of the bottle allows a tiny quantity of oxygen to enter, and this will generate later the micro-oxidation.

The other main element in the evolution of the wine occurs with the addition of the few grams of sugar, the dosage, before the bottle receives its final cork. This sugar will cause a **micro-maderisation** – certainly very weak and very slow in the case of wines which have very little dosage, like Bruno PAILLARD Champagnes, but just as natural it is perceptible.

It is the combination of this **micro-oxidation and micro-maderisation** that will characterise the evolution of the wine after the disgorgement.

« Life after dégorgement. . . »

The wine will pass through five or six 'lives'. The first is dominated by fruity aromas – citrus, red fruits – and where the colour is still pale and the mousse, although fine, is very lively. This is the «**age of fruit**». The second period sees a floral dominance: white flowers and roses, and the colour remains pale but the mousse may subside slightly. This is the «**age of flower**». The third period is characterised by the accentuation of spiced notes and nuts – almonds, hazelnuts – this is the «**age of spices**». To this are added notes of baked bread – this is the «**age of toasted**». Finally the wine evolves towards notes of candied fruit, gingerbread, honey and even roasted aromas. This is the **torrefaction / candied fruit stage**, the stage of **fullness**.

According to the conditions of conservation, this maturity – fruit-floral-spice-toast-candied-roasted can be short or long. It will still take a minimum of four to five years after disgorging to obtain the first spiced notes and even decades to attain full maturity.

Only the greatest champagnes can offer this path of evolution that real amateurs look for, as they have pleasure in keeping these wines in their cellar among other grands crus.

Youth brightness

up to 2/3 years

Maturity balance

from 3/4 to 6/8 years

Completeness complexity

beyond 6/8 years

