

珍藏  
香檳



What is the one word you would think of when it comes to vintage champagnes? Well, there would not be just one but really quite a few like 'special' and 'expensive' would pop into mind. 'Special' because it is a vintage after all and not every year qualifies as a vintage, only the years with the best grape harvest gets the title rank. And of course 'expensive', a good vintage commands a good price after all and that is not very surprising. But what would be the best season to savour these vintage champagnes? Well, right about Valentine's Day would be good. It is known that during this romantic season, prices tend to be a tad higher than usual but well, it has to be worth the money if you would be burning a hole in your pocket. One way to impress your date is not the place you would be having the romantic dinner or the fantastic present that you have bought, rather the choice of beverage chosen during dinner that would have your date raise an eyebrow. And to give you a hand, we chose vintage champagnes for this season's showcase just how special your date is. Not only does it impress, it would definitely score some points in the ladies department for having an exquisite taste. *Cuisine Wine Asia* has selected vintages from 1995 to 2005 so have a read about these vintage champagnes and see what our panelists have chosen for this passionate season. CK





★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

**1999 Delamotte Brut, Blanc de Blanc**

Light yellow colour with aromas of floral and a good fruits nose. Full-bodied entry with a smooth and mellow flavour. Slightly sweet on finish. *Lee How Sheng*

**S\$118.15**

*Distributed by eWineAsia*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

**2000 Jacquesson Grand Cru**

Slight pale yellow in colour. Earthy and fruity aromas on the nose with a hint of metallic and earthy texture on palate. *Lee How Sheng*

**S\$211**

*Distributed by Beam Global Asia*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

**2002 Dom Perignon Vintage**

Clean and fresh on the nose with aromas of lemon and toast. Though young on the palate, it shows much potential. Good length. *Timothy Goh*

**S\$240**

*Distributed by MHD*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

**2002 Veuve Clicquot Rich Vintage**

Pronounced nose of honeyed toast and marzipan with notes of fresh croissant and a whiff of cinnamon. Crisp acidity with a long and laged finish. *Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW*

**S\$135**

*Distributed by MHD*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

**2002 Jacquesson**

Ripe apples with fresh pear and baked bread aromas with a hint of jasmine. Crisp, fine and tight knit on the palate. Long and mineral flavours on the finish. *Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW*

**S\$211**

*Distributed by Beam Global Asia*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

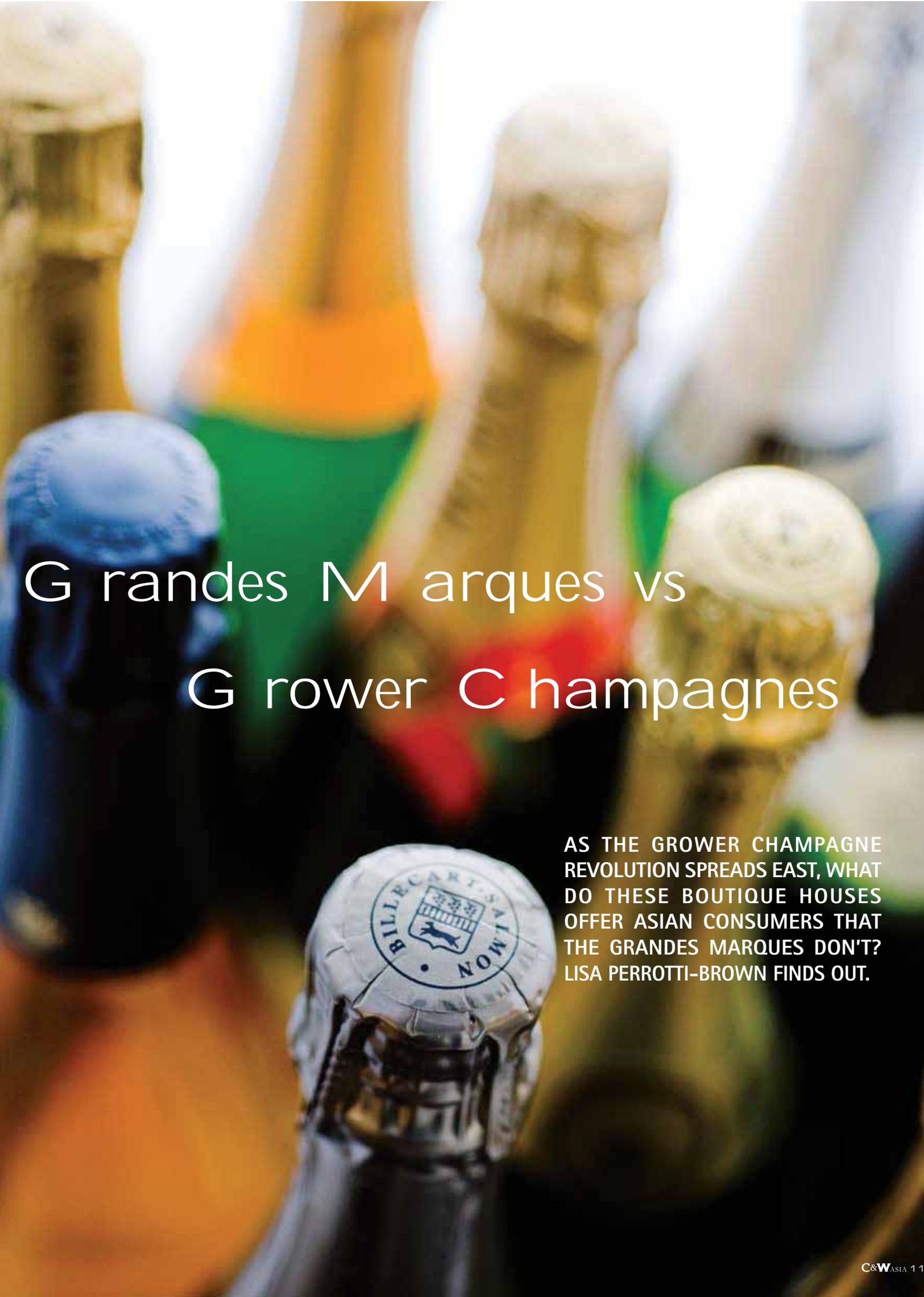
**2005 St Jean**

Pale yellow in colour with fine bubbles. Soft, elegant and stylish entry on the palate. A fine-balanced champagne that would need time in the bottle. *Nicola Lee*

**S\$119**

*Distributed by Champagne Penet-Chardonnet*





Grandes Marques vs  
Grower Champagnes

AS THE GROWER CHAMPAGNE REVOLUTION SPREADS EAST, WHAT DO THESE BOUTIQUE HOUSES OFFER ASIAN CONSUMERS THAT THE GRANDES MARQUES DON'T? LISA PERROTTI-BROWN FINDS OUT.

Alexandre Penet's family has owned vineyard land in the Grand Cru Champagne areas of Verzy and Verzenay since the French Revolution but it was not until the 1930s that they began producing small quantities Champagne under their own Penet-Chardonnnet label. For many years they sold the bulk of their grapes to larger champagne houses and what little wine they produced was distributed locally. "My parents never learned to speak English, they didn't have an international focus," he pointed out. Penet has recently taken over the management of the estate and he's making some ambitious changes in the cellar and in distribution. For a start he has appointed an agent in Asia and sales to Singapore began earlier this year. "Our goal now is to achieve 80 percent exports." Penet is part of an emerging uprising in Champagne of small growers taking on the big Champagne giants, the Grandes Marques, looking to put their vineyards to work for themselves. He's not alone – for the last few decades in France there has been a rebellion being waged. Contrary to the export situation, the Grandes Marques' control over French domestic sales of the bubbly has been overthrown by many small Grower Champagne labels.

In Asia, with the phenomenal growth in wine trade between the Occident and the Orient during the latter part of the 20th Century, Champagne exports became dominated by a handful of well-known Grandes Marques, mainly because it was only these large houses that could afford the luxury of export personnel and marketing. Into this new century wine lists from Sapporo down to Singapore remain largely in the hands of a few big names of Champagne nobility. But changes are afoot. Encouraged by successes on their home turf and the overseas coups of a few cult-status revolutionaries, more and more Grower Champagne producers are now looking to conquer export markets. The revolution is spreading East.

The term Grande Marque literally translates from French as great or big brand. The origins of this tight-knit club's member list of houses dates back to 1882 although it wasn't until 1964 that the term Syndicat de Grandes Marques de Champagne was adopted and therefore Grande Marque was first rather immodestly coined. In 1997 disputes amongst the houses forced the Syndicat de Grandes Marques to disband, though the term is still widely used in reference to that elite network, consisting of just 24 big players: Ayala, Billecart-Salmon, Bollinger, Canard-Duchene, Deutz, Dom Perignon, Heidsieck & Co Monopole, Henriot, Krug, Lanson, Laurent-Perrier, Moët et Chandon, G H Mumm, Perrier-Jouet, Joseph Perrier, Piper Heidsieck, Pol Roger, Pommery, Ch & A Prieur, Louis Roederer, Ruinart, Salon, Taittinger and Veuve Clicquot.

While each of these great Champagne labels has significant vineyard holdings, they are also heavily reliant on purchasing grapes from some 15,000 small grape growers in order to meet their production requirements. With better profits from selling Champagne as opposed to grapes, many of these growers have traditionally vinified and bottled a proportion of the grapes from their vineyards or used one of the local co-operatives to make their own wine. Though their marketing funds and distribution means may be limited, growers and co-operatives can often produce and sell the Champagne name at a lower price than the big brands. For this reason, sales of grower and co-operative Champagnes have proven very successful with consumers in France, now dominating that market. But it's not all top-notch fizz

at a fraction of the cost. Truth be told, the overwhelming majority of Grower Champagne and co-operative labels available especially in French supermarkets and on brasserie wine lists aim purely to undercut the grande cheeses on price and their quality can be a bit of a hit-or-miss. The moral is, if something looks too good to be true, it probably is.

The exciting news for Champagne connoisseurs is that an increasing number of growers like Alexandre Penet have recently been focusing on producing Champagnes of real quality and individuality. During the last four or five years a handful of Grower Champagne revolutionaries of particular quality have attracted the attention of importers and Champagne lovers in Asia. Names of emerging cult icons such as Henri Giraud, Jacques Selosse, Alain Robert and Egly-Ouriet are becoming highly sought after, often commanding higher prices in Asia than Grande Marque prestige cuvees such as Dom Perignon and Louis Roederer's Cristal. So what can these Johnny-come-lately Grower Champagnes offer Asian palates that the historically reigning Grandes Marques can't provide in a far grander fashion? "The first key point is unprecedented variety," remarked Henry Hariyono, manager of Artisan Cellars in Singapore, which currently stocks 25 houses and approximately 90 Champagnes in their portfolio, nearly all Grower Champagnes. "There are no less than two thousand growers in Champagne who bottle their own wines today. Most believe in making cuvée wines which speak of the terroirs they come from, be it a specific village or climate in a vineyard. The combination of these aspects creates numerous unique tastes which tend to be generalised if the specific wines are blended. The latter is true in the case of Grandes Marques' bottlings which emphasise a consistent house-style and so the winemaking technique employs pervasive, systematic blending of grapes from various vineyards to achieve it."

For those seeking a great Grower Champagne experience, here are a few quality markers that generally set many of the superlative examples apart from their Grande Marque counterparts:

Grower Champagnes	Grandes Marques
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vintage / batch / parcel variation is sought rather than minimised.</li> <li>• Terroir influence is manifested since the grower's vines are normally clustered around a single village.</li> <li>• Disgorgement dates are increasingly adorned on the labels so that consumers can easily monitor bottle aging.</li> <li>• The use of very little or zero dosage (added-sugar) is prevalent – the aim is to taste grapes, not sugar!</li> <li>• Usually production is small, giving the wines a rarity factor and exclusive nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wines are blended to produce a consistent house-style.</li> <li>• Grapes are often sourced from 50 or more vineyards throughout the Champagne region.</li> <li>• Disgorgement dates are coded and stealthily hidden on most of the big brands.</li> <li>• A typical Brut style Champagne can contain up to 15 grammes per litre of sugar.</li> <li>• Mainly large production.</li> </ul>

On the other hand there is something to be said in favour of consistency particularly in terms of assuring the level of Grande Marque quality that can be achieved on a large scale by their sheer size and purchasing power. Penet-Chardonnet may have six hectares of Grand Cru vineyards yet the prestigious Grande Marque house of Louis Roederer owns upwards of 214 hectares mainly of Grand Cru and Premier Cru calibre. "At Roederer, we have a unique position to combine the best of both worlds," Damien Motte, Louis Roederer's Asian export manager points out. "We are really 'viticulteurs' (looking after the best of the terroir in our exceptional vineyards) but also 'négociants', with a real know-how. The blending allows us to master a very high level of quality, which is really difficult to reach if you don't have large and extended vineyards. It would be more difficult for a small grower to balance an average harvest. We could make 'single vineyard champagnes' but we don't, because we think the blending power is heads above. For Brut Premier, for example, we use grapes from 45 crus and 250 allotments." This point is well made since it can be argued that the smaller holdings of Grower Champagnes leave them much more exposed to the vagaries of nature and crop failings thereby rendering it difficult to produce a signature style or guarantee the same level of quality year in and year out. However, Franck Herbaux, director of the South East Asia based specialist wine importer/distributor Estima, questions the real quality of heavily blended and manipulated mass-production Grande Marque Champagnes. "Grower Champagnes offer an artisanal approach to winemaking which is the only way to produce wine at a high level of quality," he contends. "In the case of Anselme Selosse, Francis Egly, Jerome Prevost, Cedric Bouchard or Bertrand Gautherot whose wines we import in Singapore, this artisanal approach includes much work on the soils, the use of organic products for treatments, low yields and picking of grapes at full maturity so there is no need for chaptalisation. Nothing fancy here, this is just the way great wines are made anywhere in the world so there is no reason why it should be any different in Champagne. The results in bottle for consumers are wines with character and integrity. Not a so called luxury sparkling drink formatted to deliver the brand taste of a given Champagne house but rather a wine with a natural identity."

It is always satisfying sipping a quality Champagne that has been lovingly handcrafted by a farmer and even more thrilling to realise that there are only thousands, or sometimes hundreds, of these bottles available worldwide.

Henry Hariyono, manager of Artisan Cellars in Singapore

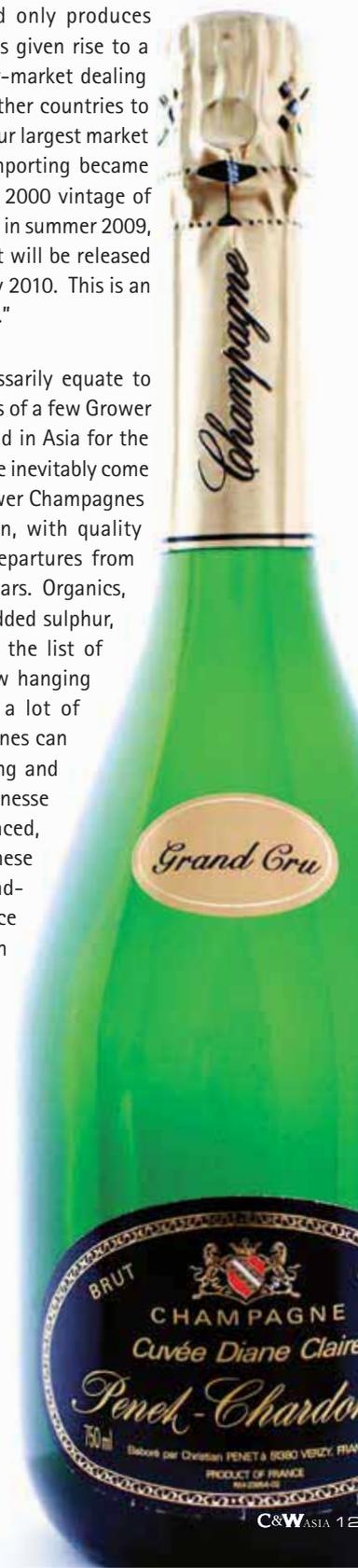
Another point made by Hariyono distinguishing Grower Champagnes from Grandes Marques is rarity. "Grower Champagnes are produced in limited quantities," he commented. "It is always satisfying sipping a quality Champagne that has been lovingly handcrafted by a farmer and even more thrilling to realise that there are only thousands, or sometimes hundreds, of these bottles available worldwide. (Contrast

this experience to drinking one among the hundreds of thousands, or often millions of bottles which typify a Grande Marque's production.) This aspect is particularly important for people who prize exclusivity. Grower Champagnes are, by default and thanks to their limited production, therefore 'exclusive!'"

This rarity aspect is one that Motoko Thomas of Kaigai Fine Wines (KFW), the Singapore representative for Champagne Henri Giraud, knows well. Demand in Asia for this small cult Champagne grower's top cuvee, "Fût de Chêne", far outweighs supply. And it's hardly surprising since owner/winemaker Claude Giraud only produces around 2,000 cases per annum. This has given rise to a lot of 'parallel importing', a type of grey-market dealing where buyers purchase indirectly from other countries to fulfil consumers' needs. "Japan is by far our largest market in Asia," Thomas remarked. "Parallel importing became such a problem for us in Japan that the 2000 vintage of Fût de Chêne has been released first there, in summer 2009, before any other country in the world. It will be released to other markets in autumn 2009 or early 2010. This is an effort to avoid further parallel importing."

Being small and exclusive doesn't necessarily equate to better quality though. With the successes of a few Grower Champagne names and increased demand in Asia for the next new small-production big-thing there inevitably come a lot of opportunists. Many me-too Grower Champagnes seem to be hopping on the bandwagon, with quality claims often backed solely by trendy departures from convention both in the vineyards and cellars. Organics, biodynamics, wild yeasts, new oak, no added sulphur, no dosage, no malo, micro-oxidation – the list of techniques upon which growers are now hanging their hats is seemingly limitless. Yet a lot of these well-intentioned Grower Champagnes can be misguided by the latest grape growing and winemaking fads, greatly missing the finesse mark and haphazardly forging unbalanced, monstrously atypical Champagnes. In these incidences, the reputation and tried-and-tested styling of a Grande Marque can once again provide their loyal customers with added reassurance.

At the end of the day, whether a die-hard Grande Marque loyalist or a new-regime grower fanatic, undoubtedly the greatest benefit to Asian consumers of this Grower Champagne revolution's arrival is that today there is a greater diversity of Champagne labels available in Far East than ever before. The increased competition afforded by this Champagne shake-up puts paid to the former mediocrity of choice, expanding the quality boundaries. Long may the revolution last! LPB



**Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW's Recommended Grower Champagnes:**

### **Champagne Penet-Chardonnet Grande Reserve Extra Brut Grand Cru NV**

Approximately 66 percent Pinot Noir, 34 percent Chardonnay. No dosage and no malo-lactic fermentation.

Green apple, roasted hazelnut and warm toast aromas with nuances of lemon zest and honeysuckle. Very dry with notably high acidity that is nicely balanced by ripe, concentrated fruit. Long citrusy finish. **91**

### **Champagne Penet-Chardonnet Reserve Brut Grand Cru NV**

Approximately 66 percent Pinot Noir, 34 percent Chardonnay. Six grammes / litre dosage and no malo-lactic fermentation.

Aromas of warm apple tart, brioche and spiced pears. Crisp acidity and nice, nervy intensity on the palate. Very pure. Long finish with some minerals. **89**

### **Champagne Penet-Chardonnet Rose Brut Grand Cru NV**

Approximately 66 percent Pinot Noir, 34 percent Chardonnay. No dosage and no malo-lactic fermentation.

Pale to medium salmon colour. Wild strawberry and cranberry aromas on the nose complimented by floral hints and a bit of nuttiness. The palate has nice weight and reveals a richer style. Bone dry with very high, refreshing acidity. Long finish. **90**

### **Champagne Penet-Chardonnet Cuvée Speciale "Diane Claire" Grand Cru NV**

This wine is only produced when there is a great vintage to make up the bulk of the blend. This cuvée is 80 percent comprised of the 1999 vintage and 20 percent reserve wines. Approximately 66 percent Pinot Noir, 34 percent Chardonnay. No dosage and no malo-lactic fermentation.

The nose is a little mute to begin but with coaxing reveals some very pleasant apple crumble, praline and croissant aromas. The palate is concentrated, very dry and very crisp. Very long chalky finish. **92**