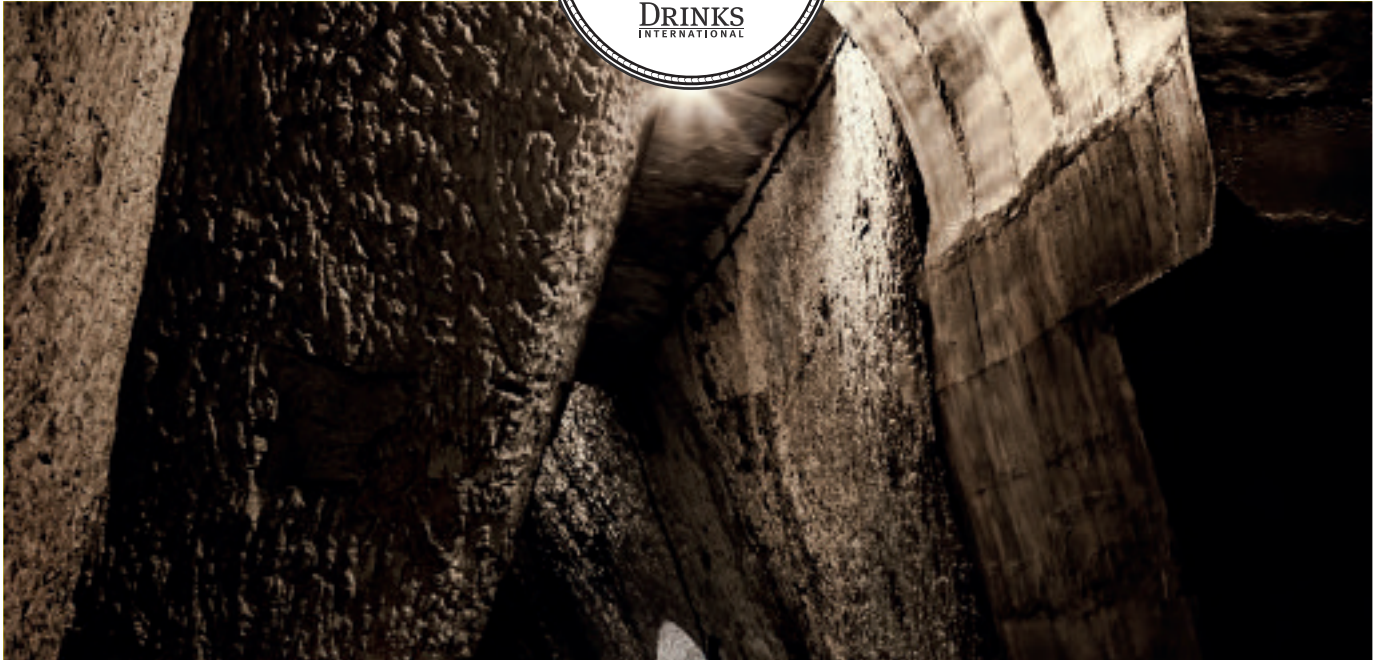




THE  
WORLD'S  
MOST ADMIRABLE  
CHAMPAGNE  
BRANDS  
2020

DRINKS  
INTERNATIONAL





# HOW WE DID IT

DRINKS INTERNATIONAL EDITOR CHRISTIAN DAVIS PROVIDES THE LOW-DOWN ON OUR VOTING ACADEMY AND HOW THE RESULTANT SURVEY IS PUT TOGETHER

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Our Most Admired Champagne Brands survey and supplement is now in its seventh year. The *Drinks International* Academy of wine professionals now numbers in excess of 300 – and that is 300 professionals who have a specific interest in, and professional knowledge of, the champagne market.

They are drawn from a range of specifiers and commentators, including: buyers, retailers, wholesalers, importers, agents, marketers, sommeliers, bar managers, bartenders, masters of wine and specialist wine writers – such as our narrator,

Giles Fallowfield. The process of voting remains the same as in the previous six years.

Academy members are asked to choose the five champagne brands they most admire based on the following criteria:

- The quality and consistency of the brand's champagne, paying particular attention to its main, flagship, non-vintage expression;
- Does the branding, packaging and marketing reflect the positioning, stance and niche of the house?
- Overall, is the brand's quality, imagery, positioning

and overall stance in line with its recommended/suggested retail price?

- Bottom line: Is the brand liked, approved of, respected and, therefore, admired.



## THE EBB AND FLOW OF BRANDS REFLECTS ANNUAL THEIR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The ebb and flow of brands reflects their annual marketing and promotional activities, plus how their champagnes have performed at tastings, anchored by their long-term, overall reputation for elaborating and making high-quality champagne.

Over the coming pages, 'Champagne Guru' Giles Fallowfield gives an authoritative assessment, based on his knowledge and experiences from tastings and visits, as to how each brand in *Drinks International's* top 30 Most Admired Champagne Brands got to be where it is.



# 2 CHARLES HEIDSIECK

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This is the highest position Charles Heidsieck has achieved in the six years of this survey.

It received nearly as many first and second votes as first-placed Roederer, so it's certainly plausible the top slot can be reached. For now Charles sits between the two brands it most admires in terms of image and reputation, and director Stephen Leroux is delighted to see *Entreprise Patrimoniale d'Investissements (EPI)* efforts at restoring its reputation are starting to bear fruit. It is, after all, still only nine years this July since the group, run by Christopher Descours, purchased Charles and Piper Heidsieck from Rémy Cointreau.

The hardest part of this exercise, Leroux says, was rebuilding the global distribution, working with like-minded people who understand the core values of the brand. With that stage completed and positioning in key markets correct – in terms of pricing and where the wines are made available – he feels it is now a relatively easy job to build up sales, which have reached around 1m bottles. The brand has already stepped up production, bottling 50% more than it is currently selling in anticipation of an uplift in demand from the already established customer base.

It is present in all the most important countries in Asia, with Leroux optimistic about the Chinese market, where it was approached by its importer because he was a fan of the wines. It has achieved impressive 55% sales growth in the US, 18% growth in the UK and sales in France are up

10%, he says. "Building sales now will be easier than it was repositioning the brand and changing its distribution over the past seven years. We are looking to double sales in the next seven."

It's long been the case that the wines at Charles really stack up in terms of quality. The blueprint for this was laid down by former cellar master Daniel Thibault back in the mid-80s. He was given the time – by the farsighted André Hériard-Dubreuil, of Rémy Cointreau – to build up large quantities of reserve wine. And the money to enable him to hold back releasing his Charles Mis en Cave Brut, with lots of reserve wine in the blend and extra ageing, until it showed gloriously.

The man currently in the hot seat is Cyril Brun, who joined from Veuve Clicquot in May 2015, so now we are seeing the first Brut

Réserve on the market, based on the 2015 harvest, that bears his signature. It was a relatively small bottling – the new distribution had not been built then – and it's likely this wine will move to a 2016 base before the year ends, says Leroux.

The Brut Réserve blend was slightly tweaked in the early days of EPI ownership by Régis Camus, now responsible for Rare (see Piper Heidsieck entry) and the large number of crus used reduced slightly to around

60. Brun hasn't played around with this relatively recently established blend, but I suspect he has had an influence on the make-up of the Brut rosé. After all, he was the man in charge of red wine and rosé production at Veuve Clicquot at a time when it really invested in this category – and it is showing a little bit fresher, while retaining some of its Brut counterpart's attractive creaminess. I tasted with Brun some of the component parts of the white Brut Réserve blend based on the 2016 harvest at the Reims cellars in December that year and sense this will be the first blend where he is really involved.

Last year saw the launch of the 2008 vintage for Charles, following the 2005, a vintage few other houses made, although it was a very successful release in a sumptuous rich style. Under a by-then disinterested Rémy Cointreau ownership, fewer than 5,000 cases of the '08 were produced. A 60/40 Pinot Noir/Chardonnay blend, it doesn't have the linear acidity of many '08 releases. But, placed next to the '05 vintage, showing gloriously in magnum, at the same launch lunch it certainly looked pretty youthful. It needs more time to show its true pedigree, we can safely say.

We also tried 1989 Charles in jerooam, which EPI still has quite large stocks of in bottle, magnum and jerooam, thanks to the foresight of cellar master Daniel Thibault, who ensured it produced lots of large-format bottlings of this ripe and expressive vintage.

So, while he waits for his own vintage wines to be released – and they are likely to be at least five years away – Brun does have the real pleasure of showing off past glories. And a new release of Champagne Charlie is ageing in the cellars too.



IT'S LONG BEEN THAT THE WINES REALLY STACK UP IN TERMS OF QUALITY



PHOTO: POL BEAUFORT





CHAMPAGNE  
**CHARLES  
HEIDSIECK**

*Maison fondée à Reims en 1851*



## Time unlocks the true potential of the 1989 Vintage

Hailing from one of the great vintages of last century, the Charles Heidsieck 1989 Jeroboam becomes more remarkable with each year that passes.

Enhanced by thirty years of ageing in Charles Heidsieck's 2000-year-old chalk cellars, this wine has become, in its most imposing format, the gem of the House Crayères Collection.

Vivid and resonant, the 1989 Jeroboam developed the full power of its long maturation: revealing a wine of great complexity and grace, with a freshness and vibrancy that belies its age.

LA COLLECTION  
**CRAYÈRES**

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MOST ADMIRABLE CHAMPAGNES 2020

# THE LIST

1	LOUIS ROEDERER	UP 2
2	CHARLES HEIDSIECK	UP 2
3	POL ROGER	DOWN 2
4	BOLLINGER	UP 1
5	KRUG	DOWN 3
6	RUINART	UP 4
7	BILLECART-SALMON	DOWN 1
8	DOM PERIGNON	NON-MOVER
9	TAITTINGER	NON-MOVER
10	HENRIOT	UP 4
11	JACQUESSON	DOWN 4
12	LAURENT-PERRIER	UP 7
13	DEUTZ	UP 2
14	SALON	DOWN 3
15	VEUVE CLICQUOT PONSARDIN	UP 2
16	HENRI GIRAUD, AY	UP 10
17	GOSSET	DOWN 5
18	CASTELNAU	UP 10
19	ALFRED GRATIEN	RE-ENTRY
20	BRUNO PAILLARD	DOWN 4
21	VEUVE-FOURNY	RE-ENTRY
22	PERRIER-JOUËT	DOWN 9
23	LE MESNIL	UP 1
24	PALMER & CO	UP 6
25	PIPER HEIDSIECK	DOWN 3
26	ALAIN THIÉNOT	RE-ENTRY
27	G.H. MUMM	RE-ENTRY
28	MOËT & CHANDON	DOWN 7
29	LANSON	RE-ENTRY
30	POMMERY	RE-ENTRY