



Top of the Pops

IN LOS ANGELES, **LA FÊTE DU CHAMPAGNE** WAS MUSIC TO SPARKLING WINE LOVERS' EARS

by Allison Levine

Founded by sommeliers Peter Liem and Daniel Johnnes as “the world’s premier Champagne festival,” La Fête du Champagne came to Los Angeles for the first time last November. A full weekend of events centered around the French bubbly took place, including seminars, a grand tasting, and a gala dinner of epic proportions. In conjunction with the festivities, a few Champagne houses in attendance had special reason to celebrate.

wine is vinified in barrels without malolactic fermentation, and the final dosage is low. Tasting the Cuvée 1522 2014, the Cuvée 1522 2002 L.V. “Long Vieillessement,” and the Cuvée 1522 2008 and 2014 Rosé, I found a common thread of elegance, complexity, and minerality.

Mathieu Roland-Billecart, seventh-generation CEO of Billecart-Salmon, came to celebrate the launch of his family’s newest prestige cuvée, the Billecart-Salmon 2008 Louis Salmon. Its



PHOTO: ALLISON LEVINE

Mathieu Roland-Billecart is seventh-generation CEO of Billecart-Salmon.



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Louis Roederer’s Brut Nature labels were designed by Philippe Starck.

and creamy, it showed an elegant purity with a lovely backbone of acidity and minerality as well as notes of lemon, dried flowers, red apple, stone fruits, and fresh bread.

Louis Roederer chef de cave Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon was on hand to showcase the newly released Louis Roederer 2015 Brut Nature, packaged with a label designed by famed French architect and designer Philippe Starck. A friend of the house, Starck is a connoisseur of zero-dosage Champagne and was the inspiration for this wine; with the current release, Lécaillon aimed to create an extremely dry expression that would speak to both the terroir and the vintage. The result is a blend of Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir sourced from family-owned vineyards in Cumières.

Louis Roederer’s Brut Nature is made only in warm vintages when the grapes can reach full ripeness; the inaugural vintage was 2006, followed by 2009, 2012, and now 2015, which I found striking for its chalky minerality. The house also recently released the 2015 Brut Nature Rosé; the second vintage of the label, first made in 2012, it was equally stunning, with notes of crushed seashells. **W**



PHOTO: LISA GALLO

Champagne Philipponnat’s Charles Philipponnat, right, and his son François.

Charles and François Philipponnat, the father-and-son team behind Champagne Philipponnat, were there to mark the 500th anniversary of their estate. They hosted a tasting of Philipponnat’s Cuvée 1522, which commemorates the year their family settled in the village of Aÿ. Cuvée 1522 represents a blend of Grand Cru vineyards, primarily Pinot Noir from their estate vineyard in Aÿ as well as Chardonnay from Verzy and some additional Pinot Noir from Mailly. A portion of the

namesake was the brother of Elisabeth Salmon, who founded the Champagne house with her husband, Nicolas François Billecart, after their marriage in 1818; Louis served as the estate’s first cellar master. Formerly known as the vintage Blanc de Blancs, the wine was made from Chardonnay sourced from the Côte des Blancs: 40% came from Chouilly, 33% from Cramant, 20% from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, and 7% from Avize. It spent 11 months on the lees and was disgorged in 2020. Full-bodied