

## *The Night They Invented Champagne*

By Dave Preston – Guru of the Goodlife® & Baron of the Bubbly

In the words of that world famous champagne aficionado Madame Denise Gerbich, “If you are breathing, champagne is good any time, any place and for any reason and if you’re not, what have you got to loose?” “Come quickly! I am tasting stars!” Dom Perignon is to have said upon his first sip of champagne centuries ago. Since then, celebrities have been enjoying the storied beverage, as well as talking about it, endorsing it, rapping about it, serving it at their weddings, and pouring it on each other in winning locker rooms. Following, according to legend and rumors, are celebs, the champagnes they drink, and what they may have said on the fizzy topic.

- **James Bond** (Roger Moore)

Dom Perignon

"Any man who drinks Dom Perignon '52 can't be all bad."

- **Pamela Anderson**

Veuve Clicquot

"I have two words for you: Champagne."

- **Jack Nicholson**

Veuve Clicquot NV-Brut

"It's as good as it gets."

- **Donald Trump**

Louis Roederer Cristal

"A little moderation would be good. Of course, my life hasn't exactly been one of moderation."

- **F. Scott Fitzgerald**

As long as it's top-of-the-line

"Too much of anything is bad, but too much Champagne is just right."

- **Christina Aguilera**

Veuve Clicquot

"What a girl wants, what a girl needs."

- **Sir Winston Churchill**

Pol Roger

"Meeting Franklin Roosevelt was like opening your first bottle of Champagne; knowing him was like drinking it."

- **Madonna**

Louis Roederer Cristal

"I just think of you and I start to glow."

• **Courtney Cox** as Monica Gellar on "Friends"

Perrier Jouët-Fleur de Champagne-Rosé

"Chandler! It happens to lots of guys. You were probably tired, you had a lot of Champagne! Don't worry about it!"

• **Napoleon**

Jacquesson & Fils-Brut

"In victory, you deserve Champagne. In defeat, you need it."

• **Madame de Pompadour**

Any Champagne

"Champagne is the only wine that leaves a woman beautiful after drinking it."

Tales from the vine, fact and fiction, add a little romance to wine. And the wine that has come to epitomize romance, Champagne, carries with it one of wine history's most enduring and popular tales - that of a Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon, who legend has it "invented" Champagne. History disputes this fanciful story, for the sparkling wines of Champagne existed long before the famous monk. Effervescence occurred naturally, if not always, in these wines. The cold climate sometimes inhibited the completion of fermentation, but a second fermentation ensued as the cellars warmed in the spring, creating some sparkle in the barrel from which most wine was served at this time. The effervescence was highly desirable, but it could not be controlled.

History does concede that Dom Perignon made significant contributions to the development of Champagne, from vine management to cellar techniques. But most importantly, he is recognized as the innovator of blended Champagnes. In the cold climate of Champagne where grape sugars are low and individual wines can border on austere, blending enables a winemaker to achieve more pleasing flavors and complexity. It is an art that has since been perfected by the large Champagne houses which strive to produce a consistent "house style." For that Dom Perignon deserves an everlasting place in the tales of the vine.

In the European Union and many other countries, the name Champagne is legally protected by the Treaty of Madrid in 1891 designating only the sparkling wine produced in the eponymous region and adhering to the standards defined for it an Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; the right was reaffirmed in the Treaty of Versailles after World War I.

Even the term *méthode champenoise* or champagne method was forbidden consequent to a court decision in 1994. As of 2005, the description most often legally used for wines produced like champagne is *méthode traditionnelle*. Sparkling wines are produced worldwide, and many producers use special terms to define them: Spain uses Cava, Italy designates it *spumante*, and South Africa uses Cap Classique. An Italian sparkling wine made from the Muscat grape uses the *Asti*. In Germany, Sekt is a common sparkling wine. Other French wine regions cannot use the name Champagne, i.e. Burgundy and Alsace produce Crémant.

Other sparkling wines not from Champagne sometimes use the term "sparkling wine" on their label, while most countries have labeling laws preventing use of the word Champagne on any wine not from that region, some – including the United States – permit wine producers to use the name "Champagne" as a semi-generic name. One reason American wine producers are allowed to use European wine names is that the Treaty of Versailles, despite President Wilson signature, was not ratified by the U.S. Senate. The Treaty of Versailles included a clause limiting the German wine industry and allowing use of the word Champagne only for wines from the Champagne

region, (the site of WWI battles). As the U.S. Senate did not ratify the Treaty, this agreement was never respected in the United States.

Champagne is a single Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée. Grapes must be the white Chardonnay, or the black Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier. Most Champagnes are made from a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. for example 60%/40%. Blanc de blanc (white of white) Champagnes are made from 100% Chardonnay. Possibly the most exquisite, and definitely the most expensive of these is grown in a single premier cru vineyard in Le Mesnil-Sur-Oger for Salon. Blanc de noir (white of black) Champagne is pressed from 100% Pinot Noir or black grapes, using a special quick-pressing, so that the black color of the skin does not stain the vin de presse (pressed grape juice).

And then there are those glorious bubbles...an initial burst of effervescence occurs when the champagne contacts the dry glass on pouring. These bubbles may form on imperfections in the glass that facilitate nucleation or on cellulose fibres left over from the wiping/drying process. However, after the initial rush, these naturally occurring imperfections are typically too small to consistently act as nucleation points as the surface tension of the liquid smooths out these minute irregularities. There is a proper way to open champagne. Contrary to what is often shown in film and television, is it very impolite to allow the cork to make a loud "pop" sound. The cork should be slowly and carefully turned for removal.

As for the champagne glass...rumor has it that the saucer-shaped champagne glass was molded on a famed beauty's breast. Over the years, this claim has been made of a number of women; Marie Antoinette, the narcissistic French Queen and wife of Louis XVI and of "let them eat cake fame", was to have had champagne glasses fashioned from casts of her breast so courtiers could drink to her health from them. Empress Josephine, the wife of Napoleon, had a great fondness for the bubbly – her champagne bills were have said to horrified the short guy – and thus glasses were fashioned from her breasts.

Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry II, was said to have a glassblower at their Chateau d'Arnet, make as a present for King Henry, who was particularly enamored with her breasts, craft a glass. Another version tells it was his idea and was only using the left breast. Helen of Troy, whose face was to have launched a thousand ships lover, Paris, was to have made wax molds of her breasts, thus creating the champagne goblet.

None of the famed beauty's breast tales hold up. The champagne glass was designed and made in England around 1663. That date rules out Josephine and Marie Antoinette who were born long after that date. As for Poitiers, she died a century before either that glass of beverage was invented. If she existed at all, Helen of Troy predates champagne and the glass about two millennia. No one knows how these rumors began but it would be a good guess it was someone's drunken observation on the shape of the glass coupled with a dollop of a male fantasy.

Popularity and salacious lore aside, the coupe is not the glass of choice for champagne connoisseurs. As a prolific fan of the grape, I swear that the best glasses to tipple from are flutes, which are tall and thin with lips that curve inward slightly at the top. Flutes concentrate the bubbles and the bouquet, heightening the champagne experience.

And as in the movie *Gigi* – Audrey Hepburn and Louis Jordan – so aptly put it;

It's plain as it can be ...They thought of you and me...They absolutely knew,

that all we'd want to do...is fly to the sky on champagne...and shout to everyone in sight;  
that since the world began...no woman or a man has ever been as happy as,  
The night they invented champagne! POP! Carpe Diem my friends and make it a point to go  
out and live the goodlife!