

## Some great Pol Roger vintages

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These notes were taken during a tasting in London to coincide with the launch of the 1996 vintage of Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill, Pol Roger's big-boned de luxe cuvee. It is a magnificent wine that should continue to develop for many, many years. Pol Roger are experimenting with different closures during the ageing process. Apparently wines closed with corks rather than crown caps during the ageing in bottle process are fresher according to Pol Roger. The great surprise was the quality of the Winston 1993, not the most celebrated champagne vintage, at the moment.

### **POL ROGER BRUT CHARDONNAY**

From Le Mesnil, Cramant, Oger, Oiry, Chouilly and Avize, this 'sleeping beauty' as Pol Roger call it, is a blend of only Grand Cru Chardonnays, mostly from their own vineyards supplemented by the fruit of some contracts 50+ years old. The point of this flight was to prove that Chardonnay can age. First made in 1959, the Brut Chardonnay was a response to Christian de Billy's realisation that there was increasing demand for Blanc de Blancs. Hubert de Billy assured us that "Dad was always very against any foreign taste, so we abandoned wooden casks in 1974."

#### **Pol Roger Brut Chardonnay 1998** 17+ Drink 2009-15

Disgorged 28 apr 05. Pale greenish gold. Extremely fine bead. Compact, introvert nose. Still very tightly wound. Great tension but not ready. Lots of acidity and very fine textured. Embryonic.

#### **Pol Roger Brut Chardonnay 1996** 18.5 Drink 2006-16

Disgorged 28 mar 05. Extremely lively mousse. Wonderful meat and two veg nose – broad and yet dense. A certain creaminess reminiscent of cream soda. Lots of interest here with something reminds me a bit of Dom Pérignon character. Very tight knit underneath too but there is sufficient bouquet already to keep one entranced.

#### **Pol Roger Brut Chardonnay 1988** 17.5 Drink 2004-09

Disgorged 01 dec 97. The deepest gold of these four. Smells definitely mature. Nutty, almost a hint of oxidation – very evolved. A certain sweetness hits the front palate. This if anything tastes even older than it really is. Definitely for

drinking with food rather than as an aperitif. Very fresh, neat finish. More evolved than the regular Pol Roger 1988.

**Pol Roger Brut Chardonnay 1985 18**

Disgorged 30 oct 92. Greenish gold. Some sweetness and florality. A completely different style to the more savoury 1988. Fine and dense – very flirtatious mousse. More delicate than the 1988. Could be drunk as an aperitif. Very small, frost-reduced crop.

**CUVÉE SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL**

Created in 1975 to replicate what the great man enjoyed drinking – a wine, or burgundy with bubbles rather than a champagne. 1996 a milestone because the 10<sup>th</sup> cuvée, Others apart from those below were 1975, 1979, 1982, 1985 and 1986. According to Pol Roger UK, “we feel Winston Churchill is a bit of a bonsai luxury cuvée but we have ambitions to grow.” Mostly Pinot Noir and the proportion has been increased from 1996.

**Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill Cuvée 1996 18.5+ Drink 2006-20**

Disgorged 20 jul 05. Still pale gold. Very deep and sumptuous on the nose. Smells like a cross between red and white Côte de Beaune. Lots of lemon cream sensation and very fine bead. Explosive. Still tight and there’s lots yet to come but certainly capable of giving great pleasure now. You almost feel it needs decanting there is so much there! Not especially long. More Pinot than in the past.

**Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill Cuvée 1995 17.5 Drink 2004-14**

Disgorged 02 mar 05. Mid green gold. A certain sweetness on the nose – perhaps not quite as ‘serious’ as the 1996. The simplest wine of all these. Fine, well made, well balanced with a suggestion of apples but not as captivating as the other vintages. Good texture. Easy and relatively open.

**Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill Cuvée 1993 18 Drink 2002-14**

Disgorged 12 feb 03. Exactly the same colour as the 1995. Much more evolved on the nose than the 1995 – seriously interesting. Very dense with some green notes. Hint of damp plaster! Very fine and dense and uplifting. Great race! Very good. Great balance. Not massive in the way that 1990 is massive but a very fine wine – especially for drinking now. This is the surprise of the range.

**Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill Cuvée 1990** 18 Drink 2000-10

Disgorged 27 oct 99. Very deep gold. Very full and ripe – very 1990 – only just champagne rather than full-bodied white wine, this one. But then a top tracery of the sort of green refreshment that is so evident in the 1993. Quite rich and almost fat. You can see the Winston Churchill in this one all right. Burly. Should not be attempted without food. Not sure it will last all that long. Very, very long.

**Pol Roger, Sir Winston Churchill Cuvée 1988 (jeroboam)** 18.5 Drink 2004-15

Disgorged 16 mar 99. Much paler than the 1990. Exceptionally lively mousse. Very firm indeed. Nuanced. Lovely layers and subtlety. Rich but dry and savoury. Very fine in every way. No hint of 1988 austerity. A lovely open flower now.

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