

Marc Chauvet, Brut Tradition NV Champagne

13 Oct 2009 by Jancis Robinson

From €13.29, £17.99, \$30.99, NZ \$66.99, AU \$65

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The British media have recently been bedazzled by the notional prospect of champagne as cheap as £10 a bottle by Christmas, floated by one or two industry observers, fuelled by the current malaise in the champagne market. But I find it difficult to believe that really cheap champagne will be much fun to drink.

This week I'm recommending a grower's champagne, **Marc Chauvet, Brut Tradition NV Champagne**, currently imported into the UK by The Real Wine Company and selling for £17.99. See their offer [here](#). I liked it so much that I ordered it for our elder daughter's party for her friends after her forthcoming nuptials. Chauvet is based in the village of Rilly-la-Montagne and ticks just about every box.

As I have just learnt from their [excellent website](#), the vines are grown by attractive-looking young Nicolas Chauvet, who is wedded to sustainable viticulture, and the wines are made by Clothilde Chauvet, proud of being a woman in what is usually a man's job. Tick, tick!

More important perhaps is that the stuff tastes delicious. Not too sweet, not at all tart, nicely balanced, very brisk and appetising but with good length. The current blend is apparently based on the excellent 2004 vintage with 30% of older reserve wines with a third each from the three usual constituent varieties Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

I'm also surprised and thrilled to see how well distributed this wine is, available in France, the US, the UK, New Zealand and Australia (you'll need the pro version of wine-searcher.com to get the full listing). The Chauvets, incidentally, report that one Nicolas Chauvet was already growing vines in Rilly in the 16th century. This picture of the Chauvet family was taken in the 19th.



For those looking less for a bargain and more for a new name rather higher up the champagne ladder, may I recommend **Eric Rodez**, another champagne-making enterprise with a long history – nine generations in this case. I tasted wines from this family enterprise for the first time last month thanks to importers Gauntleys of Nottingham, who have recently added Rodez to Vilmart. Eric Rodez worked at Krug but has returned to the family's grand cru vineyards in Ambonnay and their annual production of around 40,000 bottles.

My favourite wine was **Eric Rodez, Grands Vintages NV Champagne** (sic), a de luxe, oak-aged, extremely complex, smouldering, intellectual, food-friendly blend of wines from 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2000 – all the best vintages of the last decade. Gauntley's are recommending a retail price of just under £50, which seems excellent value compared with [Armand de Brignac Gold Brut](#). **Eric Rodez 2000 Champagne** is also very fine – tight-knit, also intriguing and extremely refreshing – with a recommended price of £42.95. Best value bottling from this producer is surely the super-clean **Eric Rodez, Blanc de Blancs NV Champagne** that offers an almost Jacques Selosse style of complexity for around £35 a bottle. Find out more from their [multilingual website](#).

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