

## Vilmart & Cie Laurent Champs's elaborate ways with oak can only be admired. All Vilmart's champagnes are born in wood and the versatile use of oak imbues each cuvée with its unique character.

n the champagne business since 1890, Vilmart owns 11 hectares of vineyards mainly in Rilly-la-Montagne, a village renowned for its generous Pinot Noir. However, against all odds, 60% of Vilmart's vineyards are planted with Chardonnay. This grower-producer really likes to deviate from the mainstream. Running the estate according to his own philosophy, Laurent Champs follows in his father's footsteps. René Champs had already chosen an organic approach and applied principles of biodynamic farming to their vineyards. Since Laurent took over in 1989, sustainability has been the watchword.

Laurent Champs is an exceptionally thoughtful character and his wines have a strong intellectual grip. Each phase in grape growing and winemaking has been thought out down to the finest detail and the end result is totally unique in style. All Vilmart's wines are fermented in oak. Large oak vats are used for non-vintage champagnes, whereas vintage champagnes are born in Burgundy barrels aged between one to six years. Chardonnay dominance

in the wines and no malolactic fermentation give an interestingly vinous and powerful, firm and briskly acidic character to Vilmart's champagnes.

Alongside rosé champagnes, non-vintage Grande Réserve is the only pinot noir dominant wine of the house. My own non-vintage favourite is Grand Cellier, since its freshness and particularly refined, perfectly integrated oakiness make it a gorgeous starting point to Vilmart's skilfully crafted range. Grand Cellier d'Or and Coeur de Cuvée are the house's most impressive champagnes, with plenty of ageing potential. With time their strong oakiness becomes rounder and an intensive fruitiness and complexity emerge. Vilmart's rosés are strongly vinous and dark, especially the saignée-method Grand Cellier Rubis.



## Vilmart & Cie Grand Cellier d'Or 2008 magnum

Serving temperature: 10°C Drinking window: 0-15 years Blend: Chardonnay 80%, Pinot Noir 20%

Alongside the 75-centilitre Grand Cellier d'Or 2011 on the market, Laurent Champs offers a magnum from the top vintage 2008, a personal favourite of all the Grand Cellier d'Ors I have tasted. The mineral vivacity and sophistication of the vintage make it rank high and, of course, the magnum size also plays a major role. A perfectly harmonious totality, this wine carries its strong oakiness beautifully, while the age-derived complexities are about to emerge.

Winemaking: This wine from Les Blanches Voies vineyard of Rilly-la-Montagne has been fermented and then aged for 10

months in 228-litre oak barrels. Malolactic fermentation is blocked. Ageing in the cellar lasts at least 5 years. Dosage is 8 g/l.

**Style:** Still young and restrained, but promising, elegant and pure nose. Lots of toasty nuances, vanilla and oaky layers, well integrated into the whole. Linear, intense palate full of vitality and finishing with a stunning salty finesse and spicy minerality.

Grande Réserve NV **88 p.** (-> 90 p.) • Cuvée Rubis NV **87 p.** (-> 88 p.) • Grand Cellier NV **89 p.** (-> 92 p.) • Grand Cellier Rubis 2009 **85,p.** (-> 86 p.) • Grand Cellier d'Or 2010 **88 p.** (-> 90 p.)

Coeur de Cuvée 2007 90 p. (-> 92 p.)

## - & & & & & ---

CHAMPAGNE VILMART & CIE RM www.champagnevilmart.com 5, rue des Gravières, 51500 Rilly la Montagne Tel. +33 (0)3 26 03 40 01 Annual production/bottles 110,000 Cellar Master Laurent Champs

Vilmart & Cie is open on weekdays from 9am-12 noon and 2pm-5.30pm. Closed on national holidays and in August. Advance booking for cellar visits is necessary.