

grapes. Subsequently, different regions have created distinct pink wine styles that are suited to various purposes. France, Spain, the United States, and Australia have traditionally driven the rosé marketplace (p. 306), but other, emerging regions are sure to produce interesting and approachable wines in the future.

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PETER LIEM: *Champagne: The Essential Guide to the Wines, Producers, and Terroirs of the Iconic Region*. Ten Speed Press, California and New York, 2017, 328 pp., ISBN 978-1607748427 (hardback), \$80.00 (boxed book and map set).

Sorry Sinatra, but I do get a kick from champagne.<sup>1</sup> Since discovering grower champagnes earlier this century and especially after visiting the Champagne region in 2016, I have kept a small stash as an essential part of my collection to enjoy with food as I would a still wine. But as much as my appreciation for this marvelous beverage has increased, it is as pale as club soda next to Peter Liem's, which is more like an intricately colored brut rosé. Liem's admiration is manifest throughout his multiple award winning volume which deftly negotiates the line between a popular account and a scholarly exposition of France's most celebrated sparkling wine.

A 1979 Salon Liem tasted in 1996 “pushed the boundaries of what I thought champagne could be...” (p. 1). As a wine critic for *Wine & Spirit*, he was able to increase his exposure and knowledge but moved full time to Champagne to completely immerse himself in the region. He began ChampagneGuide.net in 2009 and wrote his book “to provide a context for understanding the wine ... [since] [w]ine without context becomes a beverage reduced to mere flavors” (p. 2). In 2014, he cofounded La Fête du Champagne, a celebration of some of the best products from the region, which has been held in New York City and London. He now splits his time between New York City and Épernay.

<sup>1</sup> We adopt Liem's naming convention of calling the region Champagne and the wine champagne.

The book comprises three parts: Understanding Champagne, The Place, and The People. The first chapter, “The Primacy of Place,” establishes Liem as a staunch terroirist. He observes: “Over the past century, champagne has been marketed much more by brand than by place. While this has contributed to unprecedented global success, it’s also de-emphasized the concept of champagne as a wine...” (p. 12). But now more attention is being paid to where the grapes grow and how they are vinified. He concludes that this “... all relate[s] back to the idea that champagne, as a fine wine, should be subject to the same scrutiny ... as any other” (p. 12).

Chapter II, “A History,” covers the period from the 5th or 6th century, when vines first appeared in Champagne, through the present. Until the 17th century, only still wines were made in Champagne and these were known by the villages they came from and not as champagne. For example, as early as the 11th century, the wines of Aÿ were favored by royalty and are still highly regarded today. Liem cites the lack of mention of sparkling wine in a text by Frère Pierre, a student and successor of Dom Pérignon, as evidence that he never made any. The discussion of the origin of sparkling champagne which takes us across the English Channel is revelatory. We are told: “Even if the French had wanted to make wine sparkle, they didn’t have the technology” (p. 24), especially strong glass bottles and corks, that the English did, thus, enabling them to likely become the first to purposely make sparkling champagne.

The birth of the first two waves of larger champagne houses beginning in 1729 with the founding of Ruinart is chronicled in two lists (pp. 26–27, 30). Most are still thriving. In contrast, Liem includes a timeline of site-specific champagnes (pp. 40–41) beginning with his first love, Salon, the first vintage of which was in 1905, and continuing through 2008 during which time grower champagnes and single-vineyard bottlings gained prominence. In reaction to the use of questionable chemicals in the vineyards, we learn “The movement toward organic and sustainable viticulture that is so prevalent today began planting its roots among a new generation of wine-growers who took over estates in the 1980s or 1990s” (p. 39). Furthermore, Liem writes: “Somewhere in the latter half of the twentieth century, champagne became a wine of process rather than place, and the Champenois today are rectifying this error and rediscovering the identities of their vineyards” (p. 39).

Chapter III walks us through the process of making champagne from harvest through aging in the bottle. At each step, Liem intersperses quotations from prominent producers with his opinion of various elements involved such as cultured and indigenous yeasts and fermentation vessels. For those in need of guidance, there is a two-page discussion on storing and serving champagne (pp. 64–65), including advice on pairings.

Chapter IV, “Old Soils, New Farming,” ends the first part and sets the stage for the second, “Place.” A brief discussion of the region’s climate (“In general, it’s often like the Pacific Northwest of the United States,” (p. 69) he suggests) precedes sections on the soil, the cycle of the vine, modern farming, and quality farming. While acknowledging the contributions to the region’s terroir from weather, grape varieties and

latitude, although curiously not cultural components including viticulture and wine-making practices as recognized in the *Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin* (OIV) definition, Liem asserts that “Champagne’s famously chalky soils ... [are] the real foundation of the wine’s identity” (p. 70).

Most champagnes are made from Pinot noir, Meunier, or Chardonnay either individually or blended. There are also four other white grape varieties, Arbanne, Pinot blanc, Pinot gris (or Fromenteau), and Petit meslier, that are permitted along with “a handful of other grandfathered varieties no longer authorized ..., such as gros plant and various teinturier grapes” (p. 244). The latter have red skins and red pulp. Liem and I recommend seeking out the rare bottling, such as Leherde Frère *Les 7*, that includes all seven varieties.

Liem bemoans the abuse of the vineyard land in Champagne since the end of WWII that included using city garbage as mulch. “Even today, much of the vineyard land in Champagne looks unhealthy, and in the worst cases, disturbingly lunarlike” (p. 81), he laments. Indeed, during my visit to Leherde Frère, there was a stark difference between their biodynamically farmed vineyard and the neighbor’s.

The second and longest part consists of eight chapters, the first of which introduces the various regions and villages of Champagne. Included with the book is a set of seven maps originally published in 1944 by Louis Larmat. They are exquisitely detailed and would look impressive framed and hung in a large cellar. Says Liem: “The Larmat maps aren’t a perfect resource” (p. 93). “Despite [the] limitations ... these maps have proved invaluable, and they have changed the way that I view the landscape of Champagne” (p. 94). The remaining seven chapters cover each region in extraordinary detail and include more up-to-date maps. Liem challenges some of the boundaries of growing areas based on terroir differences. For example, he contends that Coteaux Sud d’Épernay which is generally considered part of the Vallée de la Marne should be regarded as a separate region because of “a greater diversity of soil types, exposures, and grape varieties” (p. 168). At the end of each of the seven chapters, notable single-cru and single-vineyard wines are listed for each region by village, a great resource for anyone in search of a unique bottle.

Part Three consists of a single chapter, “Producers of Champagne.” “Rather than creating a comprehensive directory of champagne producers, I’ve selected *négociant* houses and grower estates ... that I consider to have contributed to illuminating issues of terroir ...” (p. 211), Liem explains. In addition to some of the big houses such as the venerable Louis Roederer, owner of the largest amount of biodynamically farmed land in Champagne, we are introduced to Leclerc-Briant, a resurgent producer, whose winemaker, Hervé Jestin, is redefining biodynamics in not always a comprehensible way, but whom Liem nevertheless regards as one of the best in Champagne.

Because of the unavoidable redundancy in describing the small number of soil types, grape varieties, and champagne styles, flavors and impressions, this part can

be tiresome to read straight through. Instead, it should serve as a singular expert's guide to what to look for when shopping. For each producer, he includes recommendations for specific labels along with one to four dollar signs to indicate prices less than \$60, \$60–\$100, \$100–\$200, and more than \$200. I have found consistently delicious grower champagne for as little as \$35 and rarely need to exceed \$75 to get something memorable.

While Liem's writing makes the reading comfortable, the layout of the book can be sidetracking with single and multi-page inserts covering special topics breaking up the flow of the text sometimes in mid-sentence. Additionally, with notes for the first two parts in the back of the book, one frequently has to turn back and forth. Since there is ample room in the margins, it would have been more reader-friendly to set the notes there. Except for portraits of producers the captions for which are in the margins of facing pages, there is no indication of what the other photos that beautifully illustrate the book show. It would be nice to know, for instance, what I am looking at on pp. 142–143 and pp. 232–233. On the other hand, the 12-page glossary, bibliography, and 6-page, 3-column index are useful resources, especially for the novice.

*Champagne* is a significant work by someone who has thoroughly immersed himself into the land and culture of the region while still maintaining an independent perspective. Because of the range and depth of its coverage, the book should be of interest to collectors in search of the best producers and, although only village-level locations and not specific addresses are provided, to wine tourists planning a trip to the region. In other words, if unlike Frank, you get a kick from champagne or want to, you might get one from *Champagne* as well.

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TEIJI TAKAHASHI, KIMIE HARADA, KAZUHIKO KOBAYASHI, and HIROSHI SAITO: *Wines of Japan. A Comprehensive Guide to the Wines and Wineries of Japan*. Ikaros Publications, Tokyo, 2017, pp. 465 (bilingual edition), ISBN 978-4-8022-0477-4, \$56.77 (softcover), \$16.99 (Kindle edition).

The authors of this engaging and informative bilingual volume open with the statement “[y]ou may think it unlikely that a quality wine can be produced in Japan. ... You are however advised to update your world map of wine ... Japan has a history of about ... 150 years of making wine” (p. 5).

This observation sets the scene for a book which had its origins in a conference at the University of Tokyo in 2011, and is the first serious publication of its type in