

CHAMPAGNE Montagne de Reims

VILMART

Rilly-la-Montagne
champagnevilmart.com



Laurent Champs



Vintner Select

6215 Hi-Tek Court
Mason, OH 45040
800-597-1491
fax 513-229-3633
www.vintnerselect.com

OVERVIEW

Champagne specialist and internet blogger, Peter Liem writes: "Vilmart & Cie. is not only one of the greatest grower-estates in Champagne, but one of the finest champagne producers of any type in the region." In the early days when I first approached Vilmart and started working with Laurent Champs, the owner and winemaker, I had mixed emotions about some of the Champagnes. Please note what "mixed emotions" actually means. It doesn't mean I doubted the worthiness of the wines or thought they were mediocre. It means I had *different* opinions about *different* aspects of the wines. I was thrilled with some, intrigued with all, and wondered whether a couple were too oaky.

In the early days I think Laurent was flying blind on the matter of oak, and his recent Champagnes have—wisely—presented a more integrated and elegant profile. Yet he is adamantly a *vintner* first, before he is a maker of- Champagne: "We do wine first, then afterward we do Champagne," he says. Every base wine without exception sees at least ten months in casks of varying size and newness. Once in a while there's a brief disconnect between fruit and wood immediately after disgorgement, but 2-3 years on the cork make for a dramatic metamorphosis.

Matter of fact, I've found Vilmart among the most food-friendly of all my Champagnes, because they're so gracious, so vinous, so lordly in their carriage. Their extra flavors, and their relatively pronounced dosage, make them glide gracefully at table.

—Terry Theise

VINEYARD/CELLAR PRACTICES

- Uses certified organic viticulture.
- Low yields in the vineyards
- Barrell ferments and ages all of their base wines in neutral oak foudre, used barrique or new oak barrique.

WINES

Vilmart Grande Cellier Brut NV

CORE LIST This is so good it makes us laugh, the way certain wines can. We were looking at the stained-glass panels Laurent's father makes and suddenly I got the giggles. I kept wondering why all the scenes in these panels depict religious images or else bounteous agricultural pictures; I mean, why not show some hapless peasant being flogged or a dog humping some guy's leg? We know it must have happened. So I giggled and felt really evil. Last year I had a mystical reverie sitting in the very same spot and looking at the very same things, and this year I was like in the 7th grade again. —TT

Vilmart Cuvee Rubis Brut NV

As always, the most exotic and vinous Rosé in this offering (and possibly in all Champagne), as if it were some ether of Bonnes Mares. —TT

Vilmart Coeur de Cuvee Brut 2001

The greatest young Champagne I tasted last year, and one of the greatest I've ever tasted, and *oh dear me*, whatever was he thinking making this wine from a famously *terrible* vintage? It starts off smelling like new shoes and caramel. But man the palate is literally *unbelievable*, it has to be the best wine in Champagne in 2001. It isn't large, and the finish is more a whisper than a song, but this chrome-brilliant silvery midpalate just sizzles in an unfathomable fluorescent buzz, washing into a kind of molten coldness, and with the second sip even the finish swells into a minty grip that actually *rises* vaporously into the soft palate. You need to borrow another guy's brain to help you grasp the deep-orange neon silver miasma of this baby. —TT

ACCOLADES

Vilmart is one of Champagne's top estates. Proprietor Laurent Champs can be counted on for wines of extraordinary class and elegance. Vilmart is differentiated by the high percentage of Chardonnay in their vineyards. All of the wines are fermented in oak, although you would hardly know that tasting the wines.

—Antonio Galloni, *The Wine Advocate*

Varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier,
Total Acreage: 27 acres
Average Production: 8,750 cases