

Blanc de blancs sparkling wine

Producers around the world are drawn to it, and consumers are enjoying it in ever greater quantities, but what makes a 'blanc de blancs'? Simon Field MW sets the scene

The term blanc de blancs does not suffer translation; there is an assumption that everyone knows what it is. Méthode traditionnelle, on the other hand, is most famously associated with Champagne but usually translated as appropriate; there is, presumably, also an assumption that everyone knows what it actually means (see box). What is for sure is that the latter describes what is generally deemed to be the most time-consuming and expensive way to make sparkling wine, and the former a style which, it is inferred, majors in elegance and finesse.

It's helpful to remember that 4% of the world's wine is sparkling and 0.4% is Champagne (about 320 million bottles). A significant but still relatively minor player in the grand scheme of things. There is no available statistic to relay precisely how much of the 4% total is made traditionally and how much by the tank method or similar, but it is safe to assume that the latter makes up the majority.

Sekt from Germany, for example, is virtually never made traditionally; in Italy only a small percentage of Prosecco is aged in the bottle. These two examples bring to the fore the fact that some sparkling wines are made to be soft, refreshing and immediately appealing. The complexity engendered by bottle ageing is not always appropriate or sought.

Ageing in bottle is more time-consuming and logistically more onerous, and the product will invariably be more expensive. The play-off for the connoisseur is the added weight and complexity bestowed by the ageing on lees, with the yeast undergoing a process known as autolysis, which translates to the famous biscuity, bready notes, perceived as



hallmarks of Champagne. The fact that Cava and crémants are also made in the traditional method underlines stylistic potential, all the more so as it brings different grapes into play.

Chardonnay and beyond

Despite the fact that the 'blancs' bit of the equation can obviously refer to any white grape or grapes, it seems that winemakers, if they land upon the idea of producing a blanc de blancs, will, as can be seen in our tasting, invariably use Chardonnay – the reflected glory of Champagne perhaps too tempting in a

commercial sense. But there is more to it than that...

Cava's trinity of varieties, Macabeo, Parellada and Xarel.lo, for example, lend weight and almost tropical notes to their sparkling wines, the warmer Spanish climate combining forces with the specific personalities of the grapes. Cava is undergoing a fascinating transformation at the moment, the category's new sense of self-belief evidenced by breakaway geographical enclaves such as Corpinnat.

Conversely, at higher latitudes, blanc de blancs works well with crémants made from Pinot Gris in

'Blanc de blancs as a category is seeing slowly blossoming popularity'

Alsace and Chenin Blanc from the Loire Valley. Betwixt the two, Chardonnay holds sway again in Burgundy as one might expect; further south, the fashionable Limoux also tends to use Chardonnay for its crémants, whereas the indigenous and fascinating Mauzac makes up 90% or more of the blend in its Blanquettes, thereby offering two diverse styles.

In England the tendency to follow the Champagne template again favours Chardonnay, but this is not always the case. With a record harvest under its belt in 2018, English wine has definitely arrived, a lot of it distinctively taut and crisp, but far more complex and interesting than a decade ago. The progress of English sparkling wines demonstrates once again the equation between the traditional technique and the inferred quality; the fact that more and more are made from white grapes underlines the slowly blossoming popularity of the blanc de blancs category. Spoken, the phrase has a nice ring to it; its wines, more importantly, are by turns fascinating, accessible and extremely well crafted.

Simon Field MW is a wine trade consultant, and was a buyer at Berry Bros & Rudd for 20 years ➤

HOW IT'S DONE: SPARKLING WINE METHODS

The term 'blanc de blancs' refers to a sparkling wine that has been made exclusively from white grapes; blanc de noirs therefore only from black/red grapes. Chardonnay is the most prevalent example of the former, Pinot Noir of the latter – the two are usually blended in Champagne, often with Pinot Meunier, another black grape.

Traditional-method sparkling wine has undergone the second fermentation process and subsequent ageing

in bottle, the yeasts in the bottle contributing to the complexity of flavours over time and subsequently removed by a process known as disgorgement. Other sparkling wines undergo a similar process in a larger vessel, usually a stainless-steel tank – or, in the least expensive versions, carbonated by injection. The most commonly used methods are Charmat, continuous and transfer – all variants on the tank theme.

The verdict

It wasn't all about Chardonnay, and our judges relished the wide range of styles and fruit characters on show, awarding high scores across the board. Simon Field MW reports

It was a very positive set of results, though it's fair to point out that the majority of the wines tasted were from Europe, with only five in total from US and Australia combined and none from that stalwart of traditionally made fizz, Tasmania. A shame, as where there was healthy New World representation, ie South Africa, more than half the submissions (four of seven) scored 90pts or more.

And did Champagne dominate as some may have expected? Well, yes and no. Yes, in the sense that all but two of the nine wines which scored an average of above 91 points in our tasting were indeed Champagnes, implying extra nuance and complexity seldom found in other examples.

But no for two reasons: firstly, a Champagne did not come top of the tasting; and secondly, despite there being 20 Champagnes tasted, fewer than half scored 90 or more. The corresponding statistic was higher for both England and South Africa, despite fewer entries. What's more, an English wine, Wiston Estate's 2011, came top overall, scoring 96 points.

Susie Barrie MW correctly highlighted that some of the very top Champagnes did not enter – no Selosse or Pierre Peters or De Sousa, for example; but on the other hand those that did score highly are very well-regarded, often boutique houses such as R&L Legras and AR Lenoble.

And what of the style – was the inferred finesse and elegance of blanc de blancs evidenced, and was the dominance of Chardonnay significant? Of the 89 wines tasted, as many as 53 were made entirely from Chardonnay. There is no denying the chameleon-like quality of Chardonnay and its undisputed suitability to bottle-aged sparkling, both of which resulted in a pleasingly broad stylistic palette, but it would have been nice to see a little more variety. It was encouraging therefore that some of the non-Chardonnay wines scored well; a superb Furmint from Slovenia, a poised Chenin Blanc from Stellenbosch and a revelatory Pinot Gris from England among them.

Honourable mention must go to the Cavas. Recaredo's Corpinnat 2007 reminded me, in a moment of pure indulgence, of a Bollinger RD – praise indeed! Even if it was not classic Cava, its blend contained 30% Chardonnay. Andy Howard MW was excited to see some fine aged Cava performing strongly, showing individual style and often representing great value.

Finally, let us not forget that there is so much more to Italy than Prosecco, the Franciacortas all scoring very well; all distinct and finely rendered. The fact that Chardonnay dominated the tasting numerically should not therefore undermine that the church of blanc de blancs is broad.

'And did Champagne dominate as expected? Well, yes and no...'

A fascinating tasting, for all its ambition. The character of the wines ran the gamut from citric austerity to tropical indulgence, Chardonnay and its peers demonstrating a well-rehearsed diversity. Worthy of note, too, is that the four oldest wines (2009, 2008, 2007 and 2005, only two of which were Champagne) all scored well, at 91 and above, underlining an impressive ageing potential for this style.

Overall these wines are less savoury than their blanc de noirs siblings, and they're probably better as an aperitif than a gastronomic pairing. The best examples, however, do not lack for length and depth, whether that be in the form of steely determination or a creamy seduction, all the while never forsaking the key virtues of poise and elegance which mark out the very best wines from this increasingly popular category.

THE SCORES

89 wines tasted
Exceptional 0
Outstanding 5
Highly Recommended 28
Recommended 50
Commended 4
Fair 2
Poor 0
Faulty 0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were asked to submit dry sparkling wines made in the traditional method from only white grapes

THE JUDGES

Susie Barrie MW



A widely published wine writer, author and broadcaster, Barrie's credits include more than a decade on BBC1. She has authored several books, including The Essential Guide to

English Wine, co-written with her husband Peter Richards MW. Together the pair also co-host the annual Wine Festival Winchester.

Simon Field MW



Field was a buyer for Berry Bros & Rudd for more than two decades and now works as a consultant on areas which particularly interested him during that time. Champagne, the

Rhône and Languedoc top the list in France, with Spain and the fortified category also featuring prominently.

Andy Howard MW



Howard is a Decanter contributing editor and Decanter World Wine Awards judge. Having become a Master of Wine in 2011, he now runs his own consultancy business Vinetrades Ltd, which

focuses on education, investment and wine sourcing. He was formerly a wine buyer in retail for 30 years.

OUTSTANDING 95-97pts



Wiston Estate, Blanc de Blancs Brut, South Downs, UK 2011

Decanter average score: 96/100pts Individual judges' scores: Susie Barrie MW 96 Simon Field MW 95 Andy Howard MW 96 £42.50-£44.99 Butlers Wine Cellar, Hennings, Lea & Sandeman, Museum Wines, South Downs Cellars, St Andrews Wine Co, Swig, The Oxford Wine Co Harry and Pip Goring planted 6.5ha of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier vines in 2006, before joining with acclaimed winemaker Dermot Sugrue. The grapes for the 2011 Blancs de Blancs are sourced from the steepest, chalkiest parts of the Wiston vineyards.

Susie Barrie MW Very refined with roasted nut aromas and lovely minerality. Beautiful creamy character. Stylish, exciting, accomplished.

Simon Field MW Vanillin nose, mandarin and peaches, palate extravagant and rather delicious. This is a delight.

Andy Howard MW A lot of evolution here, combined with smoky, subtle oak notes. Complex and succulent on the palate, with good weight.

Drink 2019-2022 Alcohol 12%



Lelarge-Pugeot, Blanc de Blancs 1er Cru Extra Brut, Champagne, France NV

95 SB 95 SF 94 AH 96 £38.99 Hallgarten, In Vino Veritas Wine, St Andrews Wine Co, Stony Street House Certified both organic and biodynamic, Lelarge-Pugeot is based in Vrigny, a premier cru village in Montagne de Reims. The focus is on producing wines with minimal intervention in the winery, to truly express the terroir. The grapes for this cuvée come from five parcels on sandy loam and calcareous marl soils, and the wine undergoes four years of lees ageing prior to release.

SB Attractive bread and clotted cream aromas, palate showing a minerality, lemon freshness, some white peach notes and lovely hints of roasted nut. Dry, stylish and accomplished, and certainly with character.

SF Dense golden colour, mature nose of bruised apple and vanillin; impressive weight.

AH Powerful, complex and interesting, this has power and a real sense of place. Smoky hints on the nose with leesy evolution. The expected acidity cuts through the palate weight and power. Impressive stuff.

Drink 2019-2024 Alc 12%



Castelneau, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France 2005

95 SB 90 SF 98 AH 96 £53-£56 Corks Out, The Tasting House Champagne Castelneau celebrated its centenary in 2006, and today sources grapes from more than 900ha across 155 crus. Overseen by chef de cave Elisabeth Sarcelet, its wines are well known for their extensive lees ageing, with this cuvée spending 12 years on its lees. The assemblage combines a majority of Chardonnay from Montagne de Reims with a smaller percentage from Côte des Blancs.

SB Medium gold in colour and showing an oaky nose. Palate is a little oddly stalky. It has aged quite modestly, but is very drinkable.

SF Small, poised bubbles, nose of sourdough and Viennese patisserie. Delicious mid-palate with praline, soft spice and white chocolate; a subtle but winsome indulgence. Delicious.

AH Warm, fleshy, toasty palate. Pure fruit, a touch of smoky reduction, finely balanced – a very classy example of vintage Chardonnay.

Drink 2020-2023 Alc 12.5%



Nicolas Feuillatte, Collection Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France 2012

95 SB 95 SF 95 AH 96 £34 Waitrose Founded in 1976, the Nicolas Feuillatte brand – part of Centre Vinicole-Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte – is now the best-selling Champagne brand in France, and the third best selling in the world. Crafted by chief winemaker Guillaume Roffiaen, the grapes for the 2012 Collection Blanc de Blancs Brut are sourced primarily from Côte des Blancs, as well as Sézannais, Mongueux and the Marne Valley. The wine sees a minimum of six years of ageing in the cellars before release.

SB Classic lemon, mineral aromas of a good blanc de blancs. Rounded in the mouth but with lovely acidity and grip and a saline note. Impressive length and a lifted, vibrant finish.

SF Nose a little closed, teasing gently, palate well constructed, citric and orchard fruit in evidence. Certainly has a bright future.

AH Complexity and refinement leap out. The palate is structured and beautifully balanced. Great acidity, power on the palate yet lightness of touch. Very fine Champagne, with a long future.

Drink 2021-2026 Alc 12% ➤

OUTSTANDING (Continued) 95–97pts



Recaredo, Reserva Particular Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Spain 2007

95 SB 92 SF 97 AH 95
 £51.82 *Gourmet Hunters*

Recaredo's first Reserva Particular Brut Nature was produced in 1962. Recaredo focuses on long-aged brut nature wines, and was recently one of the six founding members of the breakaway Corpinnat group. The 2007 vintage is 64% Macabeo and 36% Xarel.lo sourced from

vineyards planted in the early 1950s, with the former fermented in stainless steel and the latter in oak. The wine sees a minimum of nine years and 10 months of ageing on its lees prior to disgorgement.

SB Tertiary truffle, mushroom and peat-like honeyed aromas. This is intriguing, balanced, and holds its brut nature status well. Certainly for fizz drinkers who like aged wines, but the mousse is still attractive.

SF Deeper colour, more mature with an almost sherried elegance, a feast of hazelnut and spice. Concentration of figs and lime, bracken and hearthside. Not ashamed to show its age!

AH Surprising nose, with some hints of warm, toasty, slightly caramelised characters. Fleshy and dense on the palate. Full-bodied, lemon acidity, lots of weight and power here. A very good example.

Drink 2019-2022 **Alc** 12%

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED 90–94pts



AR Lenoble, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Chouilly Brut, Champagne, France 2008

93 SB 94 SF91 AH 94

£39 *Stannary St Wine Co*

Mushroom and honeyed, evolved richness. Seductive, with acidity holding up well. Fine mousse, very classy. **Drink** 2020-2024 **Alc** 12%



Duval-Leroy, Pur Chardonnay Brut Réserve, Champagne, France NV

92 SB 90 SF92 AH 95

£34.95 *Amathus Drinks, Love Wine, St Andrews Wine Co* Classic Champagne in style. Crisp lemon notes, some floral lift, with a gentle mousse and plush mid-palate. Has length, structure, and the potential to develop. **Drink** 2020-2022 **Alc** 12%



Paul Goerg, Blanc de Blancs 1er Cru Brut, Champagne, France NV

92 SB 92 SF91 AH 92

£29.99 *Goedhuis & Co*

Attractive lemon, mineral and roasted nut aromas, with a bready character and plenty of personality on the palate. Bright, zesty fruit and a good finish. **Drink** 2020-2023 **Alc** 12%



R&L Legras, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Brut, Champagne, France NV

92 SB 93 SF90 AH 94

£35.95 *Lea & Sandeman*

Powerful and focused, but a real undercurrent of finesse and concentration. Lime and citrus on nose and palate. **Drink** 2020-2024 **Alc** 12%



Argyle, Spirit Hill Vineyard Blanc de Blancs Brut, Oregon, USA 2014

91 SB 90 SF90 AH 92

N/A UK www.argylewinery.com

Citrus, hints of honey, jasmine and a whisper of red fruit. Good complexity, attractive, will develop further. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 12.5%



Dominio de la Vega, Reserva Especial Brut, Cava, Spain 2013

91 SB 89 SF95 AH 89

£21.95 *Jeroboams*

Aromatics of peat, herbs and ripe citrus. Still very fresh, with tropical fruits and a shard of bright acidity to balance. **Drink** 2019 **Alc** 12%



Dveri-Pax, DP Brut Nature, Stajerska Slovenija, Slovenia NV

91 SB 93 F88 AH 92

£15 *Savage Selection*

Attractive floral notes of jasmine and a hint of rose. Soft, elegant mousse, combining with very nice acidity. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alc** 12%



Ferrari, Perlé Bianco Riserva Brut, Trento, Italy 2009

91 SB 90 SF90 AH 93

£41 *Carruthers & Kent*

Rich and ripe, yet still elegant; fine mousse and lovely purity of flavour. Citric-lime with hints of white pepper spice. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alc** 12.5%



Fox & Fox, Inspiration Blanc de Blancs Brut, East Sussex, UK 2013

91 SB 92 SF89 AH 93

£39.12 *Amathus Drinks*

Mainly Pinot Gris, full of rich stewed fruit character, but fine mousse and lovely acidity to keep it all fresh. **Drink** 2019-2021 **Alc** 12% ➤

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued) 90-94pts



Laborie, Le Traditionnel Blanc de Blancs Brut, Western Cape, South Africa 2011 91 SB 88 SF92 AH 93

£11.95-£14.99 Widely available via independent merchants

Very elegant, restrained yet complex wine showing lovely development. Creamy savoury mushroom aromas; fig, nectarine and peach on the palate. **Drink 2020-2023 Alc 12.5%**



Ricci Curbastro, Satèn Brut, Franciacorta, Italy 2015 91 SB 89 SF90 AH 93

£35 The Wine Place

A persistent mousse, with aromatics dominated by lime, verbena and tangerine. Some savoury notes allied to a saline character, and a long finish showing good typicity. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12.5%**



Wiston Estate, Goring Family Release Blanc de Blancs Brut, South Downs, UK NV 91 SB 93 SF88 AH 93

£37.49 Corking Wines, Great Wines Direct, Hallgarten

Archetypal English fizz. Herbal and nutty notes on the nose, leading to a citrus-infused palate with a fleshy and vibrant finish. Very well put together. **Drink 2019-2023 Alc 12%**

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued) 90-94pts



Lantieri, Satèn Brut, Franciacorta, Italy NV 90 SB 90 SF90 AH 90

POA Mondial Wine

Stone fruits on the nose with some lime sherbet character. Expressive, with real purity of flavour complemented by a fine mousse. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12.5%**



Moreson, Solitaire Brut, Franschhoek, South Africa NV 90 SB 89 SF90 AH 91

£19.99 Museum Wines, The Vineking

Showing good evolution on the palate and nose, with wonderful tertiary notes. Nicely delineated fruit on the palate. Crisp and persuasive. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12.5%**



Pierre Bertrand, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France 2014 90 SB 93 SF90 AH 86

£27.50 Cambridge Wine Merchants, Exel

Toasty peach characters and some obvious oak influence, but it's fresh and fruity on the palate, enriched with creamy complexity. **Drink 2021-2024 Alc 12.5%**



Bailly Lapierre, Chardonnay Brut, Crémant de Bourgogne, France NV 90 SB 90 SF88 AH 92

£15.99 Cambridge Wine Merchants

Plenty of bright lemon character, with some verbena and spice notes. A fine mousse, and a crisp, elegant palate. Eminently drinkable. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12%**

‘The character of the wines ran the gamut from citric austerity to tropical indulgence’



Billecart-Salmon, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Brut, Champagne, France NV 90 SB 90 SF87 AH 93

£60-£66.99 Carruthers & Kent, Champagne Direct, JN Wine, Le Vignoble, Selfridges

Attractive mineral, yeast and bread aromas. Some leesy evolution; a bold but refined and rather lovely wine. **Drink 2019-2023 Alc 12%**



Recaredo, Serral del Vell Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Spain 2011 90 SB 87 SF91 AH 93

£45.49 Les Caves de Pyrene

Appealing nose, with a touch of butter leading to flavours of peaches and cream. Displays some development and tertiary notes, with a hint of mushroom. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12%**

‘It was exciting to see some fine aged Cava performing strongly’ Andy Howard MW



Ridgeview, South Ridge Blanc de Blancs Brut, Sussex, UK 2014 90 SB 89 SF88 AH 93

£29.99 Laithwaite's

Big and broad textured, demonstrating wonderful finesse. Pure flavours of white peach and mandarin, and a long finish. Stylish. **Drink 2019-2023 Alc 12%**



Castel Faglia, Monogram Millesimato Brut, Franciacorta, Italy 2011 90 SB 90 SF92 AH 89

£29.95 Jeroboams

Fresh aromatics of lime and citrus, with ripe stone fruits in support, and a fine mousse with a complex yet nicely defined finish. Classy. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12%**



De Morgenzon, Methode Cap Classique Brut, Stellenbosch, South Africa NV 90 SB 89 SF91 AH 91

£22.75-£24.25 Frontier Fine Wines, Huntsbridge

Wines, Mr Wheeler, Slurp, Vin Neuf
Creamy, slightly honeyed style but with lovely purity and crisp acidity. Lively mousse and a luxurious texture, driven by layers of rich, ripe fruit. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12.5%**



Domaine J Laurens, Le Moulin Brut, Blanquette de Limoux, France NV 90 SB 90 SF92 AH 89

£16.40-£16.95 Amps Fine Wines, Wine Utopia

Bruised red apple notes underlying some delicate floral hints. Soft, grassy and approachable, leading to a strong finish. Lots of character. **Drink 2019-2020 Alc 12%**



Saronsberg, Methode Cap Classique Brut, Tulbagh, South Africa 2015 90 SB 90 SF91 AH 90

£21.25 H2Vin, Terra Wines

Full-bodied and firm, with intense lemon, mineral aromas and a lovely hint of white pepper. Shows finely drawn fruit and impressive length. **Drink 2020-2023 Alc 12%**



Schloss Gobelsburg, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Niederösterreich, Austria NV 90 SB 90 SF93 AH 88

£31 Clark Foyster

Rounded and indulgent, with a broad, warming palate, this shows lots of baked apple fruit, lifted by mouthwatering acidity. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12%**



Willm, Prestige Brut, Crémant d'Alsace, France NV 90 SB 90 SF89 AH 92

£20.99 Direct Wine Shipments

Rich baked apple fruit, with distinct oak character and a line of zesty lemon acidity. Complex and interesting, with a hint of salinity. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12%**



Ferghettina, Riserva 33 Brut Nature, Franciacorta, Italy 2011 90 SB 93 SF88 AH 90

£40-£44 Connolly's, D Byrne & Co, Kwoff, Toscanaccio

Enticing rich smoky caramel and cream aromas; fine, delicate mousse; excellent fruit concentration. **Drink 2019-2022 Alc 12.5%**



Hattingley Valley, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Hampshire, UK 2013 90 SB 90 SF92 AH 89

£47.50 Carruthers & Kent, Great Western Wine, Harvey Nichols, The Naked Grape

Impressive citrus and floral aromatics, hints of chalk and fig. Delicious integrated mid-palate, and an elegant finish. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12%**



Langham, Blanc de Blancs Reserve Brut, Dorset, UK 2015 90 SB 95 SF90 AH 86

£31 Langham Wine Estate, Lea & Sandeman

Immediately creamy and richly oaky with tertiary mushroom notes, then the palate is full of lively, tangy acidity and vibrant fruit. **Drink 2019-2021 Alc 11%**

RECOMMENDED 86-89pts

Wine	Score	SB	SF	AH	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Avondale, Armilla Blanc de Blanc Brut, Paarl, South Africa 2010	89	90	86	90	Some lovely characters here for fans of aged fizz. Rich, smoky nose with tertiary characters.	11.5%	2019-2022	£19.99	House of Townend
Barnaut, Eclat de Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	89	85	91	92	Rich and powerful, with a lovely creamy texture. Hazelnut, spice and hints of struck match.	12%	2020-2022	£31.95	Lea & Sandeman
Bernard Remy, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	89	88	86	92	Subtle bread aromas, opening to soft peach and pear fruit flavours. Classy and refined.	12%	2020-2023	£33.99	Hallgarten, Strictly Wine, Wine Poole
Biowingut Diwald, Grüner Veltliner Brut, Austria NV	89	86	90	91	Wild herb aromas, with a dry and mineral palate. Good complexity and a fine mousse. Interesting.	12.5%	2019-2021	£32	Cornelius Beer & Wine, Red Squirrel
Bouvet-Ladubay, Saphir Brut, Saumur, France 2016	89	88	88	90	Bruised red apple notes and a slightly reductive, smoky nose. Good concentration and weight.	12.5%	2019-2021	£12-14.99	JN Wine, Lay & Wheeler
Castel Faglia, Monogram Cuvée Satèn Brut, Franciacorta, Italy 2013	89	85	89	92	Quite a broad palate of red apple and peach fruit, allied with a crisp acidity. Good evolution for the vintage.	12.5%	2019-2021	£25	Gruppo Italiano Vini UK

RECOMMENDED (Continued) 86-89pts

Wine	Score	SB	SF	AH	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Cave de Turckheim, Mayerling Brut, Crémant d'Alsace, France NV	89	89	86	91	Fresh, floral and peachy. Well-made and very easy drinking, with some complexity on the finish.	12%	2019-2021	£14-£16.65	D Byrne & Co, Noel Young, WoodWinters
Domaine J Laurens, Les Graïmeous Brut, Crémant de Limoux, France 2016	89	89	91	87	Rich, generous and full-bodied with a seam of elegant acidity in support, and a touch of honey and fig as a backdrop.	12%	2019-2020	£16.99-£18	Theatre of Wine, The Good Wine Shop
Dopff au Moulin, Cuvée Julien Brut, Crémant d'Alsace, France NV	89	85	90	91	Poised, elegant and expressive. Nice mousse, and a touch of stone fruit on the palate. Decent.	12%	2019-2021	£13.50-£19.99	Hallgarten, The Wine Society
Dosnon, Récolte Blanche Brut, Champagne, France NV	89	93	87	87	Creamy oak on the nose, following through to a rich, toasty palate. Attractive with good length.	12%	2019-2021	£35	Roberson
Fermi Bohigas, Mas Macià Brut Nature Reserva, Cava, Spain NV	89	89	87	90	Very classic Cava, showing some evolution and nutty complexity. Pleasant autolytic notes.	12%	2019-2022	£11-£13	Butlers Wine Cellar, Highbury Vintners, ND John, The Good Wine Shop
Lowerland, Methode Cap Classique Brut Nature, Prieska, South Africa 2016	89	92	87	88	Distinct oak aromas. Fleshy palate and a long vibrant finish, infused with notes of spice and roasted nuts.	11%	2019-2021	£39	Red Squirrel
No1 Family Estate, Blanc de Blancs Reserve Brut, Marlborough, NZ NV	89	92	87	88	Attractive fresh citrus fruit on the attack, with a fine mousse and some smoky notes. Clean and simple.	12.5%	2019-2021	£43.02	Amathus Drinks
Schramberg, Blanc de Blancs Brut, North Coast, USA 2016	89	87	89	92	Lively mousse, with a creamy and savoury character. Gentle palate of apples and orchard fruit.	12.5%	2019-2022	£31.44	James Hocking Wine
Altemasi, Millesimato Brut, Trento, Italy 2015	88	84	89	90	Has a clear bruised apple character over hints of spice and stone fruit, with good acidity.	12.5%	2019-2021	£17-£20	Kwoff, Winearray
Canard-Duchêne, Charles VII Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	88	90	87	87	Subtle mineral, lemon aromas, hints of almond and quince. Full-bodied, yet finely tapered.	12%	2019-2022	£38.50	Champagnes & Châteaux
Château de Mauny, Brut, Crémant de Loire, France NV	88	90	87	86	Classic Chenin aromatics of raw apples and gorse. Fine mousse and a clean, simple finish.	12%	2019-2020	£15	Oddbins
Gérard Bertrand, Code Rouge Brut, Crémant de Limoux, France NV	88	90	86	89	Voluptuous and creamy on the palate, with a slightly smoky, nutty character.	12.5%	2019-2020	£24.99	Corking Wines, Hallgarten, Strictly Wine
Gramona, Imperial Brut, Cava, Spain 2014	88	86	90	89	Typical Xarel·lo character evident here: lime, lanolin and quince. Complex palate.	12%	2019-2021	£32.95	Berry Bros & Rudd
Gusbourne Estate, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Kent, UK 2013	88	93	87	85	Full-bodied, fleshy and opulent. Richly herbal nose with some yellow fruit character.	12%	2019-2021	£49.95-£59	Gusbourne, Jeroboams, The Oxford Wine Co, The Wright Wine Co
Iron Horse, Ocean Reserve Blanc de Blancs Brut, Sonoma County, USA 2015	88	87	87	90	Rich and expressive, with a powerful mousse and a palate brimming with ripe peach fruit and baked apple.	13.5%	2019-2022	N/A UK	www.ironhorsevineyards.com
La Battistina, Metodo Classico Brut, Gavi, Italy 2016	88	86	88	90	Cool, elegant and slightly understated. Not hugely complex but a nice example. Enjoyable.	12%	2019-2019	£15-£17	Houltz Wine Merchants, Taylors of Tickhill, The Vineking
Marc Hébrart, Blanc de Blancs 1er Cru Brut, Champagne, France NV	88	88	86	89	Well put-together wine, with classic lemon sherbet character and a hint of smoky reduction on the finish.	12%	2019-2022	£38.99	Hallgarten Wines, Strictly Wine, Wine Poole
Marcalberto, Blanc de Blancs Zero-Dosage, Vino Spumante, Italy NV	88	88	90	86	Very crisp, with an almost aggressive acidity. Clean and fresh, with lemon notes on nose and palate.	12.5%	2019-2020	N/A UK	www.marcalberto.it
No1 Family Estate, Blanc de Blancs Brut, New Zealand NV	88	92	85	86	Broad characters of candied lemon and smoke, with some savoury flavours and great length.	12.5%	2019-2022	£25.42	Amathus Drinks
Nyetimber, Blanc de Blancs Brut, West Sussex, UK 2013	88	89	87	88	Hints of rusticity on the nose, with sweet fruit on the palate complementing vibrant acidity. Really attractive style.	12%	2019-2021	£42-£44	Carruthers & Kent, Fortnum & Mason, Hennings, Tanners, The Oxford Wine Co, The Wright Wine Co
Paul Mas, Maison du Cirque Brut, Vin de France NV	88	92	86	87	Fresh attractive herbal and lifted aromas. Really very drinkable with a lovely note of spice.	12%	2019-2021	£15	Sainsbury's
Raventós i Blanc, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Conca del Riu Anoia, Spain 2016	88	87	91	86	Forward and fruity, with floral overtones and some iodine notes. Eloquent and expressive.	12%	2019-2019	£19.98	Berry Bros & Rudd
René Jolly, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	88	90	89	85	Powerful oaky style, with lovely mineral and roasted nut aromas. Rounded and accessible.	12%	2019-2021	£40.35	Alexander Wines, Corks Out, Ex Cellar, The Grape to Glass, The Wine Reserve
Thiénot, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	88	90	86	88	Full-bodied and quite fleshy. Savoury in the mouth with fresh apple and pear fruit alongside a fine mousse.	12.5%	2019-2023	£43.50	Champagnes & Châteaux
Wildehurst, Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay Brut, Swartland, South Africa 2016	88	86	89	88	Bready, floral and peachy. Red apple characters on the palate, with notes of spice and sweet pepper.	11%	2019-2020	£29.99	The Vineking, Vindependents
Bernard Perrot, Blanc de Blancs GC Brut Réserve, Champagne, France NV	87	83	90	87	Citric nose, and immediate oaky grip on the palate. Some bruised apple and lemon zest, with nice acidity.	12%	2020-2022	£38	Finest Fizz
Edoardo Miroglio, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Nova Zagora, Bulgaria 2014	87	84	86	92	Big bubbles and a pleasant fruit character. Very nicely constructed.	12%	2019-2021	£19.50	Swig
Frescobaldi, Brut, Trento, Italy NV	87	88	86	88	Warm, ripe and fleshy, with distinct lemon sherbet character. Clean and fresh on the palate.	12.5%	2019-2021	£27.49	Corking Wines, Hallgarten, Wine Poole
Louis Bouillot, Perle d'Ivoire Brut, Crémant de Bourgogne, France NV	87	88	87	85	Peach blossom alongside hints of tropical fruits. Assertive mousse. Attractive but not complex.	12%	2019-2020	N/A UK	www.louis-bouillot.com
Maison Antech, Cuvée Eugénie Brut, Crémant de Limoux, France 2017	87	85	89	88	A well-judged crémant showing nice weight and complexity. Clean and floral.	12%	2019-2020	£15	Flint Wines
Taltarni, Blanc de Blancs Chardonnay Brut, Australia 2015	87	86	86	90	Some savoury and earthy notes on the nose, with a very pure fruit flavour on the palate and fine acidity.	12.5%	2019-2021	£15.99	Ministry of Drinks
Terres Secrètes, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Crémant de Bourgogne, France NV	87	89	84	89	Ebullient spritz, with lively acidity and a fresh finish. Peach and lemon zest flavours.	12%	2019-2021	£16	Bob Wines, Dulwich Vintners, Noble Green

RECOMMENDED (Continued) 86-89pts

Wine	Score	SB	SF	AH	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Vignerons de Mancey, Bl de Blancs Brut, Crémant de Bourgogne, France NV	87	86	87	88	Warm and generous palate, supported by hints of bread on the nose. Persistent mousse.	12%	2019-2021	£21.25	Carruthers & Kent, Starmore Boss, The Grocery
Carpèn Malvolti, Tarvisium Brut, Veneto, Italy 2014	86	84	87	88	Lime and stone fruit notes across the nose and palate. Simple and youthful in character.	12.5%	2019-2021	POA	Hallgarten
Codorniu, Anna Blanc de Blancs Brut Reserva, Cava, Spain NV	86	89	83	85	Very herbal and appley, showing good typicity for Cava. Fresh and well made.	11.5%	2019-2020	£15	Bibendum Wine, Codorniu UK
Familia Deicas, Castelar Extra Brut, Canelones, Uruguay NV	86	86	85	86	Light-bodied and floral, with distinct grassy aromas. Palate is clean, fresh and lemony.	11%	2019-2020	£14	The Good Wine Shop, Vin Wine Merchants
Feudi di San Gregorio, Dubl Brut, Vino Spumante, Italy NV	86	85	87	85	Lively and soft with a grapefruit citrus tang; well integrated and very complete.	12.5%	2019-2019	£19.49	Corking Wines, Great Wines Direct, Hallgarten
Luretta, Principessa Blanc de Blancs Brut, Vino Spumante, Italy NV	86	85	87	85	Rich and flamboyant, with a coarse mousse. Some floral elements, but little complexity.	12.5%	2019-2020	£21.46	Mondial Wine
Minière F&R, Blanc Absolu Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV	86	83	85	89	Forward, showy style of Champagne with some reductive hints combined with sweet citrus fruit character.	12%	2019-2021	£45-£50	Domaine Direct
Oliver's Taranga, The Hunt for Mrs Oliver Brut, McLaren Vale, Australia 2017	86	83	86	90	An unusual marriage of grapefruit and gooseberry. Elegant, with good acidity and an attractive mousse.	12%	2019-2021	£32	Wanderlust Wine
Orsolani, Cuvée Tradizione Extra Brut, Caluso Spumante, Italy 2015	86	82	88	87	Floral, herbal notes combined with nice weight on the palate and crisp acidity.	13%	2019-2020	£19.20	Mille Gusti
Philippe Hébrard, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Vin de France NV	86	85	87	86	Autumnal aromatics with soft peach and hints of spice. Lots of weight and showiness.	12%	2019-2020	£13.50	Davy's
Simonnet-Febvre, Dosage Zéro, Crémant de Bourgogne, France 2013	86	88	85	84	Rich stewed herb aromas and honeyed autolytic notes, with a lively mousse. A little broad on the palate.	12%	2019-2020	£24.99	Louis Latour Agencies
Simpsons of Servian, Beora Reserve Brut, Vin de France 2016	86	84	86	88	Generous stone-fruit aromatics, with some yellow fruit on the palate. Well put together.	12%	2019-2021	£17.99	Naked Wines

COMMENDED 83-85pts

- Lallier, Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Brut, Champagne, France NV 85, 12.5%, 2019-2021, £39.50-£44 Bacchanalia, The Jolly Vintner Too, Wine Poole
- Pinord, Brut Selección, Cava, Spain NV 85, 11.5%, 2019-2021, £12.99 Hallgarten, Strictly Wine, Wine Poole

- Charles de Fère, Blanc de Blancs Réserve Brut, Vin Mousseux, France NV 84, 12%, 2019-2020, N/A UK www.charlesdefere.com
- Mongarda, Glera Col Fondo Brut, Colli Trevigiani, Italy 2017 84, 11%, 2019-2020, POA The Modest Merchant

FAIR 76-82pts

- Mar de Frades, Brut Nature, Rías Baixas, Spain NV 82
- Nicolo & Paradis, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France NV 76



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