

First taste: Bollinger PN VZ 15 – first new cuvée in over 10 years

The cuvée, made from 100% Pinot Noir, is the Champagne house's first new wine since 2008 and Yohan Castaing was impressed after recently tasting a sample...



Yohan Castaing
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The new Bollinger PN VZ15 takes a terroir approach to blanc de noirs Champagne. Credit: Raphael Heymann / Bollinger

Bollinger has launched the premier edition of its first new Champagne cuvée since 2008. It will go on sale in the UK on 21st July, with other export markets to follow.

‘This is a special, rare moment for our Champagne house,’ affirmed Charles-Armand de Belenet, head of Maison Bollinger during the launch presentation of

its first new addition to the permanent line-up of bottlings since the creation of the Bollinger Rosé cuvée in 2008.

The mission statement was quite simple and direct: create a blanc de noirs Champagne made with just Pinot Noir, which has long been the emblematic grape variety for this house.

In this choice, there is a nod in the direction of its iconic cuvée Vieilles Vignes Françaises (VVF), with which it shares an emphasis on parcellary selection for the sourcing of its grapes, although, according to de Belenet, 'we wanted the wine to be more accessible, while remaining 100% in the Bollinger style.'

To achieve its goal, Bollinger launched a competition among the in-house experts on its tasting committee, challenging them to come up with proposals in line with the aforementioned objective.

All the submitted sample blends were tasted blind in order to choose the one that best expressed the project's ambition. By fortunate chance, the sample that got the go ahead was blended by Gilles Descôtes, Bollinger's chef de cave. 'Gilles chose to highlight the terroir of Verzenay, rather than Aÿ, because in hot years, it adapts better,' explained Denis Bunner, deputy chef de cave. A small revolution for this very Aÿ-centric house.

It is true that the terroir of Verzenay has northern exposure and limestone-rich soils, so the vines struggle less in hot years. Grapes from Aÿ, Bouxy and Tauxières are also present in the cuvée.

The base wine is from the 2015 vintage, and was aged in magnums. It is well known that Bollinger is one of the rare Champagne houses that ages its reserve wines in magnums, of which there are nearly 800,000 currently in the cellars. In addition to the 2015 base wine, there is also 50% of reserve wines, including a good amount from the 2009 vintage (up to 14%), but also 2010 – both of which were aged in barrels – but also some from 2014 that was aged in stainless steel. Overall, 50% of the wine was vinified in barrel, the other half in steel, in contrast to the usual 15% that spends time in the barrel for the regular bottlings. 'We have chosen to use, as the name for this new cuvée, the in-house project code inscribed on the barrels in the cellar,' explains Denis Bunner.

PN VZ 15 with PN for Pinot Noir, VZ as an abbreviation for the Verzenay grape source and 15 for the base vintage.

Released with a dosage of 7g/l after disgorgement in November 2019, this is a Champagne that is already presenting itself with admirable allure.

The nose is complex and sumptuous, the racy palate has striking vinosity, followed by a long finish, thanks in great part to the unmistakable stamp of the Verzenay terroir.

This Champagne joins the hallowed ranks of the very top cuvées produced by Bollinger.



Bollinger, PN VZ 15, Champagne

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Marvelously powerful aromatics with delectable scents of toast, smoked hazelnuts and pastry, as well as top notes of mint. From the start, the palate is impressively vinous and concentrated but tightens in a way...

Points 94