

Love Dry Champagne? These 10 Bottles Are For You

The most familiar names in [Champagne](#) tend to be houses (known as maisons, in French) that, though they may own some vineyards of their own, primarily purchase their fruit from growers within the region. The best way to tell if a particular Champagne is produced from estate-grown grapes or fruit purchased from other growers is to look for the alpha-numeric code on the label – it’s often in a vanishingly small font. A label that reads, “NM” means that the bottle is from a Négociant Manipulant that relies on purchased grapes. You’ll also sometimes see “CM”, which means that a bottle is from a Coopérative Manipulant, or a co-op of growers. “RM” stands for Récoltant Manipulant, meaning that the Champagne was made by the same producer that grew the grapes. One isn’t inherently better than the others; they’re just different models.

The advantage of NM and CM houses is that they can produce a potentially great deal of Champagne in a consistent style, since they’re theoretically able to blend across a wide range of terroirs and micro-climates. The ten below represent some of the best maisons, with a specific focus on their Brut NV bottlings – the flagship of the vast majority of houses, produced in a consistent, predictable “house style” year after year – as well as a higher-end example as well.

08 | **Bollinger Special Cuvée**

of 10

With depth and richness to spare, Bollinger incorporates a relatively high percentage of [Pinot Noir](#) into its flagship Special Cuvée–60%, which is joined by 25% Chardonnay and the rest Pinot Meunier. This, combined with the fact that some of the wines are barrel fermented, is why it makes sense that this is a wine of power, toastiness, and drama. Bollinger’s Grande Année bottlings are also terrific – the 2014, for example, boasts aromas of lightly toasted brioche and pecans that set the stage for a palate marked by crunchy apples and Seckel pears, cumin, and minerality to spare.