

# Les Champenois celebrate new millennium

Global champagne sales are expected to reach 320 million bottles by the end of the year – up 28m on last year's record. While the price of the world's top-seller, *Moët & Chandon Brut Impérial*, remains at an average of \$34, some major houses have failed to hold the line. The retail price of Taittinger's *Comtes de Champagne* has soared from \$89 to \$150

## Typical grape varieties

Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier: 74%

Chardonnay: 26%

**1. Pressing:** Grapes – picked in September – are pressed as soon as possible. The juice, or "must", is taken from the vineyards, or "galipes", to the champagne towns where it is fermented and bottled

Metal plates squeeze juice from grapes

**La Champagne:** Home of 300,000 vineyards divided among 19,000 owners

Paris

120 miles  
200km

Reims  
Epernay  
Châlons-sur-Marne  
Champagne Country  
Bar-sur-Seine

## 2. First fermentation:

Yeast converts the sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide.

After three weeks the winter chill is allowed to stop fermentation before it is complete

## 3. Assemblage – making the cuvée:

After tasting, the raw young wines are blended before bottling

## 4. Second fermentation:

Takes place in the bottle. Carbon dioxide is unable to escape – pressure increases – and the wine is transformed into sparkling champagne. **This process takes about seven weeks**

## 5. Removing the sediment:

Bottles are stored with the neck pointing down. Every day each bottle is given a gentle shake and twist until all the yeast sediment settles on the cork.

After about ten weeks the bottle neck is frozen

and the cork removed – the gas pressure expels the frozen yeast deposit.

The bottle is topped up and a new cork is wired in before being aged

**Cellar-aging:** From 15 months – the legal minimum – to 15 years

## Secret of the bubbles:

A bottle of Champagne contains more than 4 litres of carbon dioxide (5.5 times its volume), from the second fermentation, dissolved in the wine.

**When the cork is removed this gas escapes, producing an incredible 49 million bubbles**