THE CHALK SEA

READING THE LABEL

WHAT A CHAMPAGNE LABEL TELLS YOU

1. THE BOTTLE

KEY ELEMENTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM.



Foil capsule
Often bears the producer's name or initials.

Neck label
May indicate the house.

Main label
Contains the most important information.

Back label
Includes volume, alcohol, producer details and other legal information.

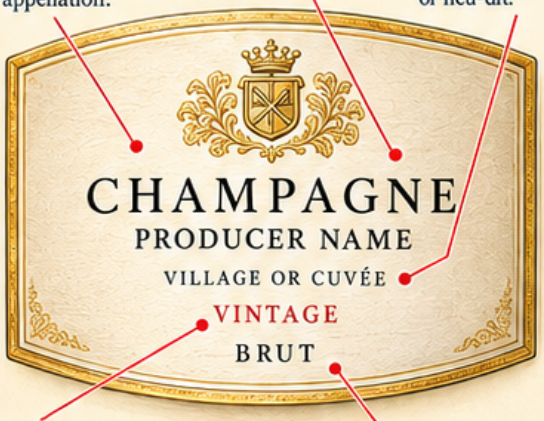
2. THE FRONT LABEL

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION.

Champagne
Must be stated on the label. Indicates the protected appellation.

Producer name
The house or grower that made the wine.

Cuvée name
A specific wine or blend, often a house name or lieu-dit.



Vintage
Indicates the year the grapes were harvested (only in vintage Champagne).

Dosage
Indicates the sweetness level (e.g. Brut, Extra Brut). May also appear as a specific dosage level (e.g. 6 g/L).

3. THE BACK LABEL

ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

Producer details
Name and address of the producer.

Producer code
Indicates the type of producer (see below).



Volume
Usually 750 ml (but may vary).

Alcohol
Shown as % vol.

Allergens
"Contains sulphites" is legally required.

4. PRODUCER CLASSIFICATIONS

THE CODE REVEALS WHO MADE THE WINE.

RM — **Récoltant-Manipulant**
Grower Champagne. Grapes are grown by the producer, who also makes the wine.

NM — **Négociant-Manipulant**
A house that buys grapes and makes the wine.

CM — **Coopérative de Manipulation**
A cooperative of growers who make the wine together.

RC — **Récoltant-Coopérateur**
A grower who gives grapes to a cooperative, which makes the wine.

ND — **Négociant-Distributeur**
A merchant who buys finished Champagne and distributes it under their own name.

MA — **Marque d'Acheteur**
A buyer's brand, often made by a producer but sold under another name.

5. SWEETNESS

DOSAGE LEVELS AND STYLE.



BRUT NATURE	EXTRA BRUT	BRUT	EXTRA DRY	SEC	DEMI-SEC	DOUX
0 – 3 g/L	0 – 6 g/L	0 – 12 g/L	12 – 17 g/L	17 – 32 g/L	32 – 50 g/L	50+ g/L
Bone dry. Pure expression of terroir.	Very dry. Crisp and mineral.	Dry. The classic style.	Slightly off-dry. Rounder and softer.	Noticeably off-dry. Richer style.	Sweet. Lush and indulgent.	Very sweet. Rare today.

DRIER ⟷ SWEETER

6. WORTH HUNTING FOR

EXTRA INFORMATION THAT CAN TELL YOU MORE.



DISGORGEMENT DATE
The date the wine was disgorged (lees removed). Gives an indication of freshness and time on lees.



GRAPE VARIETIES
May be listed on the label or back label (e.g. Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier).



BASE YEAR AND RESERVES
Some producers indicate the base vintage and the use of reserve wines, showing complexity and consistency.



LIEU-DIT
A specific vineyard or parcel name. Indicates a single site and a unique expression of place.