THE CHALK SEA

THE PROCESS

HOW CHAMPAGNE IS MADE

Champagne is made twice. First as a still wine, then through a second fermentation inside the bottle.

1. HARVEST

THE MOMENT OF PICKING MATTERS.



Grapes are usually hand harvested at optimal ripeness. Whole bunches are kept intact and handled gently to preserve fruit quality and avoid oxidation.

2. PRESSING

THE GRAPES ARE PRESSED GENTLY.



Whole bunches are pressed slowly and gently in a maximum 4,000 kg batch. Only the first 2,550 litres (25.5 hL) of juice are used, divided into the cuvée (highest quality) and the taille (second press).

3. FIRST FERMENTATION

BASE WINE TAKES SHAPE.



The juice ferments into a still white wine, usually in stainless steel tanks (sometimes oak). This base wine is high in acidity and relatively low in alcohol. Malolactic fermentation may be allowed or blocked, depending on the desired style.

4. BLENDING

GIVES THE HOUSE ITS STYLE.



Wines from different grape varieties, villages and vintages are blended to create the house style. Reserve wines from previous years are often included to add consistency, complexity and depth.

5. SECOND FERMENTATION

THE BUBBLE IS BORN.



A mixture of sugar and yeast (the liqueur de tirage) is added to the blended wine, which is bottled and sealed with a crown cap. A second fermentation occurs in the bottle, creating natural carbonation and around 6 bars of pressure.

6. LEES AGEING

THE WINE DEVELOPS AS BOTTLES REST.



The bottles rest on their lees (dead yeast cells), developing complexity, texture and autolytic aromas such as brioche, biscuit and toast. Non-vintage Champagne must age at least 15 months; vintage Champagne at least 3 years, though many age far longer.

7. RIDDLING & DISGORGEMENT

THE YEAST SEDIMENT IS COLLECTED AND REMOVED.



Bottles are gradually turned (riddled) so the lees collect in the neck. The neck is then frozen and the crown cap removed, expelling the sediment in a controlled burst (disgorgement). A small amount of wine is lost in the process.

8. DOSAGE

THE FINAL ADDITION DETERMINES SWEETNESS.



A small amount of wine and sugar (liqueur d'expédition) is added to replace the lost volume and determine the final sweetness level, from Brut Nature to Doux. The bottle is then sealed with a cork and wire cage and allowed to rest before release.