



# CUVÉE SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL 1999

ASSEMBLAGE : Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

## SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL AND CHAMPAGNE POL ROGER – A LASTING FRIENDSHIP

The relationship between Champagne Pol Roger and Sir Winston Churchill dates back to a providential meeting at a luncheon given by the British Ambassador to France some months after the liberation of Paris at which was served the sumptuous 1928 vintage of Pol Roger. Attending the lunch was the beautiful Odette Pol-Roger as well as the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, with whom she struck up an instant rapport. A friendship was born which continued until Churchill's death, creating links between the Pol-Roger and Churchill families which are still as strong to this day.

The pressures of his post sadly prevented Churchill ever paying a visit to 44 Avenue de Champagne, the home of Champagne Pol Roger, but he nonetheless proclaimed it "the most drinkable address in the world". As recompense for breaking his promise to visit he sent Odette a copy of his Memoirs inscribed "Cuvée de Réserve, mise en bouteille au Château de Chartwell". He even named one of his racehorses "Pol Roger" and the filly strode to victory at Kempton Park in 1953, Coronation Year.

## THE "CUVÉE SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL"

Champagne Pol Roger created their Prestige Cuvée in homage to Sir Winston Churchill mindful of the qualities that he sought in his champagne: robustness, a full-bodied character and relative maturity.

The exact blend is a closely guarded family secret but it is undeniable that the composition would meet with the approval of the man to whom it is dedicated: "My tastes are simple, I am easily satisfied with the best". Pinot Noir predominates, providing structure, breadth and robustness whilst Chardonnay contributes elegance, finesse and subtlety.

Composed exclusively of grapes sourced from Grand Cru Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards which were already under vine during Churchill's lifetime, "Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill" is only made in the very best vintages and is always released later than the other vintage dated Champagnes from Pol Roger, marking Churchill's appreciation for older wines.

## PREVIOUS VINTAGES OF THE CUVÉE

The first "Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill" was from the 1975 vintage and was released, in magnum only in 1984 with the launch taking place at Blenheim Palace. There followed 1979, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 1998. The latest vintage, 1999, is the twelfth and is released only after 10 years cellaring. Produced in very small quantities, it is available in 75cl bottle and magnum with a limited release of jeroboams to follow in September 2010.

## THE STORY OF THE VINTAGE

1999 was characterised by temperatures on average 1.8° C above the norm and by heavier than normal rains throughout the growing cycle. Generally the season from May until the harvest passed without notable incident. Taking the region as a whole, the harvest began on 15th September and finished on 1st October. The rains that fell during the *vendange*, which were more than double the average, did not prevent the harvest from breaking records. The results were nonetheless exceptional, combining very healthy grapes from an abundant crop with good maturity and an average alcohol level of 9.9%.

## THE "CUVÉE SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL" 1999

Even in the more challenging vintages great wines can be made. Dominique Petit, cellar master for Champagne Pol Roger, working alongside Patrice Noyelle and members of the family, made a rigorous selection of *vins clairs* which, even at an early stage, showed all the hallmarks of a "Churchill" vintage with a near perfect balance of maturity and acidity. Pinot Noir excelled in 1999 and therefore provides the backbone and structure for this potentially long lived wine. This is the first "Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill" made by the current wine-making team in this the 150th year of Champagne Pol Roger and is a wine worthy both of the Pol Roger heritage and its most famous adherent.





### VINIFICATION AND MATURATION

The must undergoes two *débourbages* (settling), one at the press house immediately after pressing and the second, a *débourbage à froid*, takes place in stainless steel tanks at 6°C over a 24 hour period. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks kept to temperatures not exceeding 18°C, with each variety and each village kept separate until final blending. The wine undergoes a full malolactic fermentation. Secondary fermentation takes place in bottle at 9°C in the lowest Pol Roger cellars (33 metres below street level) where the wine is kept until it undergoes *remuage* (riddling) by hand, a rarity in Champagne nowadays. The very fine and persistent *mousse* for which Pol Roger is renowned owes much to these deep, cool and damp cellars.

### TASTING NOTES

Intense, yellow gold, sparkling with a myriad of fine bubbles – the Pol Roger trade-mark. The nose is structured, forceful but with subtle mineral notes and hints of lemon, white pepper and ginger. Four-square on the palate, mouth filling, robust and powerful. Touches of minerality, even saltiness, with balance, structure and finesse. A long, lingering finish.

### FOOD PAIRINGS

A wine full of character to enjoy for itself - or pair it with hard cheeses such as Comté or Parmesan.

### TECHNICAL DATA

Flowering: Chardonnay 11th June  
 Pinot Noir 14th June  
 Total area under vine: 30369 hectares (for the AOC region)  
 AOC volume: 10400 kg/ha authorised  
 Available: 75cl Bottle  
 1.5l Magnum  
 3.0l Jeroboam in presentation wooden box. (available September)

### PRESS COMMENTS

*"The greatest prestige cuvée of recent times"* **Tom Stevenson**  
*"A champagne to sip with a cigar? V persistent."* **Jancis Robinson MW**  
*"Gutsy yet elegant, the latest Winston Churchill release is a prestige cuvee for grown-ups. A rich, melted butter colour of gold, the broad, buttery toast and earthy aromas soon develop into tantalising honeycomb characters with a whiff of exotic, tropical fruits. On the palate, the lively fizz and fresh acidity give the dense cheesecake-base richness a chance to show off its full biscuity might, making this a great match for any number of robust dishes. Personally though, I would rather eke out every last drop of complexity this wine has to offer by drinking it all by itself!"*  
**Jane Parkinson**

