

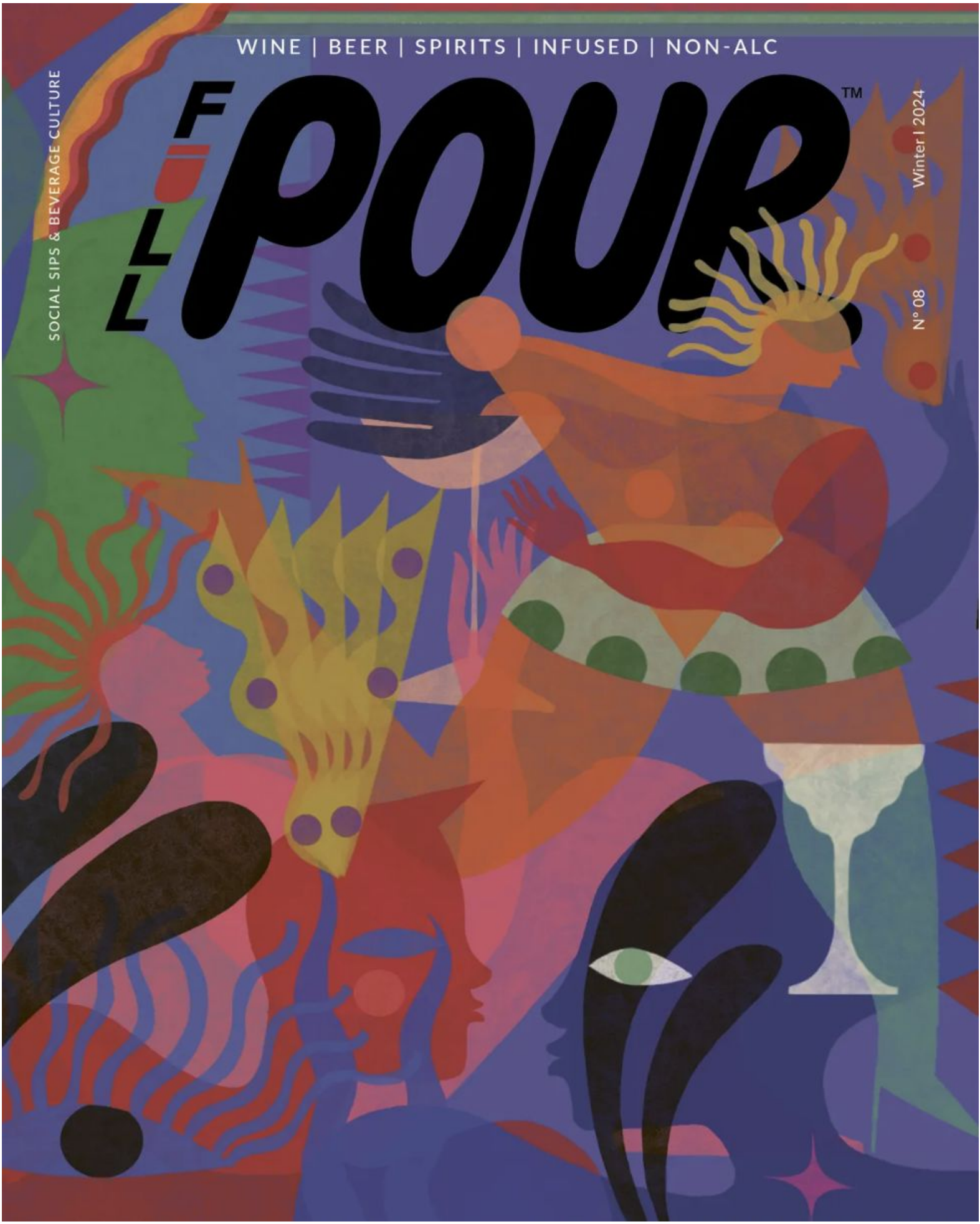
WINE | BEER | SPIRITS | INFUSED | NON-ALC

SOCIAL SIPS & BEVERAGE CULTURE

# FLIPPOUR™

Winter | 2024

N° 08





52

## FEATURES

### 36 NATURAL EVOLUTION

What is natural wine to you? Is it the same for me? What should it be? A look at the divisive journey so far, and where it all goes from here.

### 44 CELEBRATING CHICHA

How tectonic subduction zones, homeland pride and the huaso spirit drive Chile's drinks culture.

### 52 A SIP OF SITE

Raise a glass to the brewers who embrace local growers and regional ingredients to bring a real taste of place to each batch of beer they make.

### 62 NEW SCOTCH BREW

Scotland's whisky industry is often perceived as being quite traditionalist, but a new generation of distillers is pushing the boundaries and challenging the status quo.

### 68 WATER WARS

When it comes to turning water into wine, there's so much more than meets the eye. Inside the complex battles of terra firma, water rights, vintification and agricultural colonization in the vineyard.

### 78 ELEVATING THE BAR

Take your bar cart arsenal to new heights with the next wave of cannabis-infused selections for your sipping pleasure.

### 82 AS AMERICAN AS HERBAL TEA

Discover the flavors, uses and significance behind North America's native plants.

### 88 THE MAGNIFICENT MIDDLE

Venture beyond the big houses and grower Champagnes to the just-right middle ground, where artisanal practices are balanced with accessibility and reach.



68

## FULL POUR

MAGAZINE: P.O. Box 659, Brookfield, CT 06804

EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Lauren Buzzeo

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Alexander Peartree

CONSULTING ART DIRECTOR: Marco Turelli

CONNECT WITH US: [info@full-pour.com](mailto:info@full-pour.com); [www.full-pour.com](http://www.full-pour.com); [@fullpourmag](https://www.instagram.com/fullpourmag)



## SOLISCO

Empreint  
de créativité

Creative and sustainable printing is in our nature—what we do is respectful of people and the environment. Solisco is proud to be the first Canadian partner to join the PrintReleaf program, an organization that ensures that the equivalent of every piece of paper consumed in the course of producing a printed project will be replanted. Printed in Canada.

This publication is printed on paper made from 100% sustainable recycled fiber. By choosing this product, you are supporting responsible management of the world's forests.

The information and opinions included in Full Pour (ISSN 2837-9764) is for general informational purposes only. Content is not intended to act as an endorsement or recommendation for use of any product. Full Pour cannot and does not contain medical/health or legal advice or endorsement; any medical/health information provided is for general informational and educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice. Full Pour features content about alcohol and cannabis, and is intended for mature audiences only. Readers should follow any and all legal market regulations and restrictions. All information is provided in good faith; under no circumstances shall Full Pour have any liability for any loss or damage of any kind incurred as a result of the use or reliance on any information provided herein—any use and reliance on any information herein is solely at your own risk. © All rights reserved.

NEVER MISS A DROP—SUBSCRIBE AT FULL-POUR.COM



# THE MAGNIFICENT MIDDLE

**VENTURE BEYOND THE BIG HOUSES AND GROWER  
CHAMPAGNES TO THE JUST-RIGHT MIDDLE  
GROUND, WHERE ARTISANAL PRACTICES ARE  
BALANCED WITH ACCESSIBILITY AND REACH.**

WORDS JESSICA DUPUY

**In** September 2023, I had the opportunity to visit Champagne for the first time, despite many previous trips to France's other renowned wine regions. I was invited by Mathieu Roland-Billecart, seventh-generation head of Billecart-Salmon, one of Champagne's most revered names. Over a few days, Mathieu welcomed us, sharing the rich history of his family's house while offering insights into the region's broader context.

We explored the underground tunnels of Billecart-Salmon's production facility in Ay, a large operation that, despite its scale, still maintains a family-run feel. Mathieu guided us through the estate's historic family vineyard, Le

Clos Saint Hilaire. In the evenings, we sipped Champagne in the salon and enjoyed dinner paired with back vintages, where I saw a different side of Mathieu: an economic mind with a deep passion for his family's legacy in Champagne.

What struck me most during this visit was the dichotomy of Billecart-Salmon's presence in the U.S. market. To many, it appears as a large house, akin to Veuve Clicquot or Moët & Chandon, but behind the scenes, more than two-thirds of its vineyards are owned or leased by the family, with the rest sourced from trusted family growers. This visit illuminated a truth often overlooked: The middle-sized Champagne houses, which operate between the extremes of large commercial producers and small grower-producers, offer a unique blend of scale and craftsmanship.

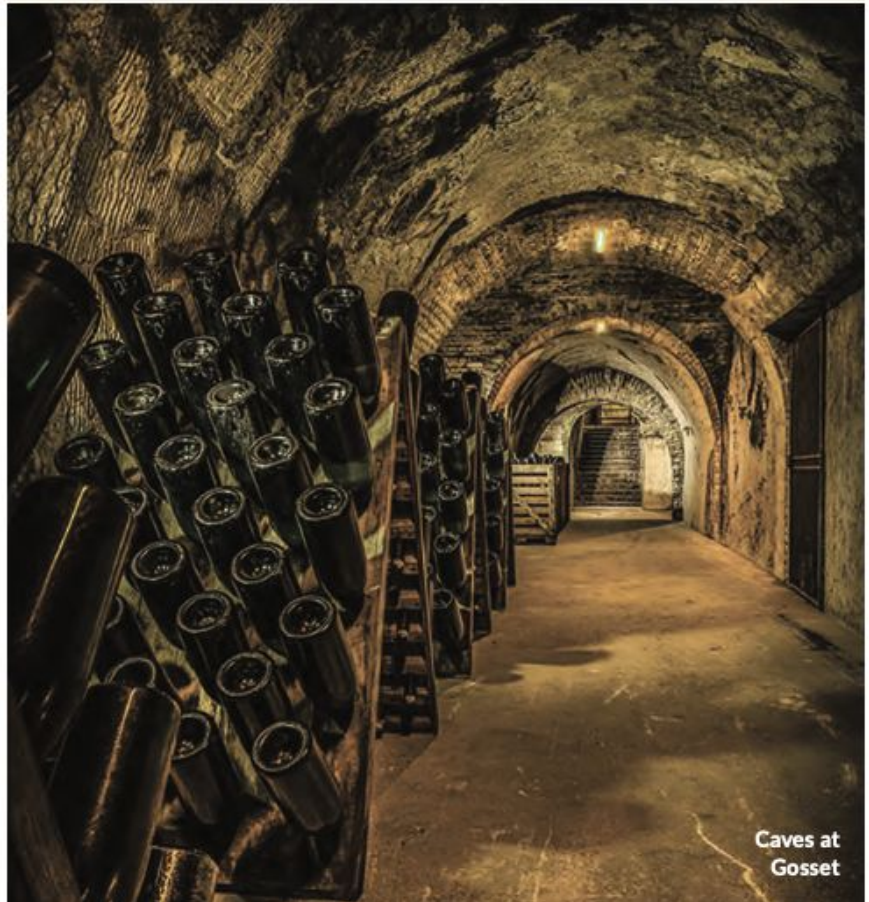
## THE CHAMPAGNE LANDSCAPE

Champagne is a region of contrasts, with more than 4,200 producers spanning small houses, cooperatives and larger maisons. Generally, small houses make fewer than 300,000 bottles annually, while medium-sized producers produce between 300,000 and three million bottles. The region spans nearly 85,000 acres and produces around 300 million bottles annually. In general, small houses tend to focus on specific terroirs or styles, while the largest producers, like Moët & Chandon, release a wide range of products that amount to more than 30 million bottles per year, dominating the global market—though this is not universally the case.

Yet, between these extremes lies a vital middle ground where houses combine the resources of larger operations with the craftsmanship of small grower-producers. As author and Champagne expert Peter Liem points out, “Some of the greatest innovations in Champagne viticulture have come from larger houses, just as there are plenty of growers who make extremely mediocre wines, ‘artisanal’ or not.”

Liem references the mid-size category as being a sweet spot for combining both quality and marketability. “Some of the best houses in Champagne fall into this bracket: Louis Roederer, Billecart-Salmon, Bollinger, Pol Roger, just to name a few,” says Liem. “This size can allow them to create the types of wines that they want without any compromise. They combine the advantages of scale with a boutique feel.”

Echoing Peter Liem’s thoughts, Master Sommelier Jack Mason acknowledges the challenges that medium-sized producers face in gaining widespread distribution. “The ones that have done a very good job at building their brand have been focusing on quality and what is unique to their story,” he says.



Caves at  
Gosset





Clos Saint-Hilaire

## THE MIDDLE-SIZED SPACE ALLOWS FOR BOTH MARKET VISIBILITY AND THE PRESERVATION OF CHAMPAGNE'S ARTISANAL ROOTS.

Mason, who has spent much of his career building award-winning wine programs at restaurants in New York and Houston with a strong emphasis on Champagne, points to several notable houses, including Bollinger and Delamotte, that have successfully maintained this balance. He praises Billecart-Salmon for its recent focus on varietal and terroir-specific cuvées, demonstrating their commitment to innovation while maintaining a grower mentality.

At the end of the day, the likes of Liem, Mason and Roland-Billecart stress that size, whether large, small or medium, is not an indicator of quality. There are great Champagnes from producers across the board—and not-so-great Champagnes as well.

“The delta between the grower-producer and the large house is getting blurred, and thankfully, we as consumers are all benefiting from that,” says Mason. This middle-sized space allows for both market visibility and the preservation of Champagne’s artisanal roots, offering a unique and essential contribution to the Champagne landscape.

With a balance of scale and craftsmanship, here are four producers that offer consumers a diverse range of high-quality Champagnes.





Vineyards in  
Aÿ-Champagne

## BILLECART-SALMON: CRAFTSMANSHIP AT SCALE

Founded in 1818, Billecart-Salmon blends tradition with innovation under the leadership of seventh-generation CEO Mathieu Roland-Billecart.

“We are not industrial,” says Roland-Billecart. “We are craftsmen working at scale.”

Producing around 2.5 million bottles annually, the house strikes a balance between large-scale production and the artisanal touch of small producers. With more than two-thirds of its vineyards owned or managed by the family and long-term partnerships with growers across 40 crus, the house ensures a consistent supply of high-quality grapes.

“We have the chance to do things properly, and we have more means than small producers to invest in our product,” says Roland-Billecart.

The house’s winemaking combines old-world techniques, such as fermenting wines in oak casks, with modern technology, like a temperature-controlled tank room specifically for dosage blending, resulting in Champagnes that express their terroir with precision.

“With the right vision and discipline, the medium-sized independent houses are able to get the best of both worlds,”

says Roland-Billecart. “Small enough to keep enough control to produce exceptional wines, big enough to manage all elements of the winemaking process in house directly and be of sufficient scale to be able to supply top restaurants and hotels across the world.”

## CHAMPAGNE AYALA: INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

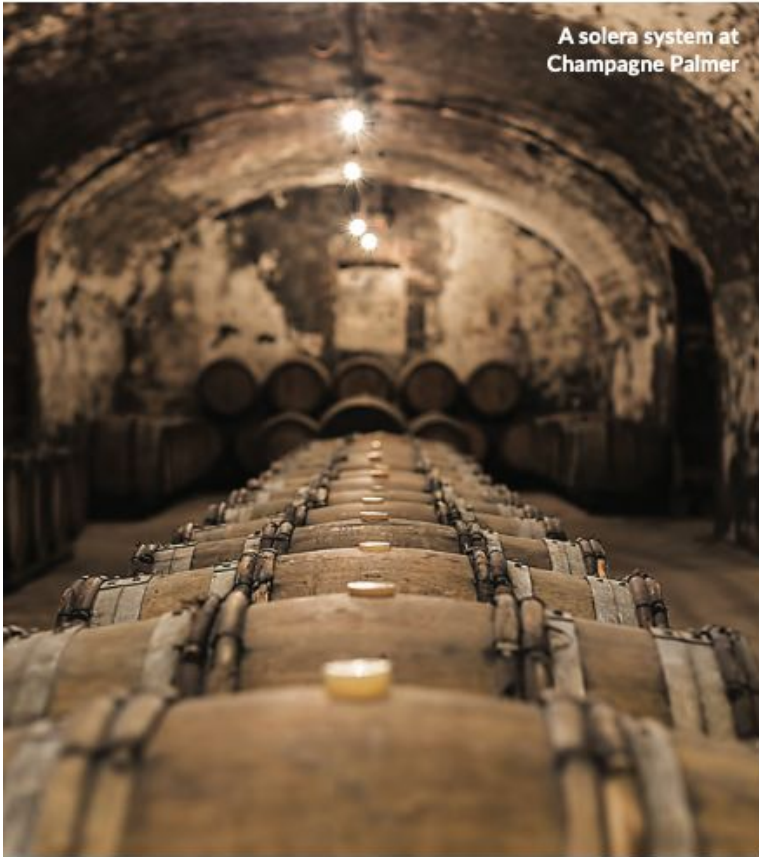
Ayala, founded in 1860 and acquired by Bollinger in 2005, maintains its distinct identity even after its acquisition. Julian Gout, Ayala’s cellar master, emphasizes blending for purity and precision.

“At Champagne Ayala, blending is an art, and purity is a signature,” says Gout.

Producing around one million bottles annually, Ayala balances modern vinification tools with a respect for natural winemaking processes, like native yeast fermentation, crafting cuvées that preserve the unique characteristics of each cru.

The house’s flagship cuvée, Brut Majeur, is a blend of over 70 crus, or vineyard sites, each vinified separately to maintain their distinct qualities. This meticulous approach ensures that Ayala’s Champagnes remain vibrant and fresh, a hallmark of the house’s style.





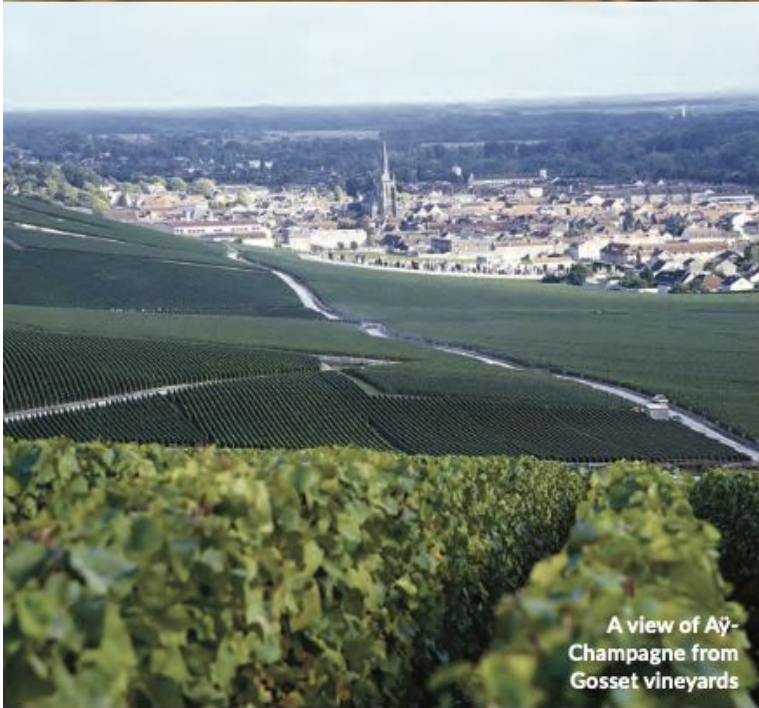
A solera system at Champagne Palmer

## CHAMPAGNE PALMER & CO: A COOPERATIVE SUCCESS

Founded in 1947 by seven grower families with premier and grand cru vineyards in the Montagne de Reims region, Palmer & Co now represents 350 grower families that manage more than 1,000 acres across 40 crus, including 500 acres of vineyards classified as premier cru or grand cru. Palmer uses its cooperative model to pool resources and create exceptional Champagnes, drawing on a diverse range of terroirs.

Palmer’s focus on quality extends to its strategic vineyard management, especially in the Montagne de Reims, a cooler area increasingly valuable as climate change impacts the region. Their cooperative model provides access to a state-of-the-art winemaking facility in Reims, which has allowed them to grow from 600,000 to one million bottles annually in the past eight years.

“Brands like us—middle size, quality-oriented—it’s a good place to be,” says Communications Manager François Demouy, highlighting Palmer’s ability to navigate a crowded market despite occasional perception challenges associated with being a cooperative.



A view of Aÿ-Champagne from Gosset vineyards

## CHAMPAGNE GOSSET: BLENDING HISTORY AND CRAFT

Founded in 1584, Champagne Gosset is one of the region’s oldest houses, blending centuries of winemaking expertise with the intimacy of a smaller producer. Gosset maintains a boutique feel while benefiting from the resources of a mid-sized house.

“We are producing less than a million bottles, making us one of the smallest of the mid-sized houses,” explains Odilon de Varine, Gosset’s chef du cave and deputy managing director.

This smaller scale allows them to prioritize craftsmanship and maintain an artisanal approach to winemaking. Gosset doesn’t own vineyards but partners with growers across roughly 370 acres, selecting the best grapes to produce from just under 250 acres. This flexibility ensures diversity in the final blends.

“We are able to vinify all crus and the musts from every vine-grower partner separately,” says de Varine, emphasizing the house’s meticulous attention to detail. *EP*

COURTESY PALMER & CO.; CHAMPAGNE GOSSET