

Year's Best Cabernet Sauvignon • 2011 Vintage Port Redux: Steal these LBVs

# Wine & Spirits

90 Exceptional  
Champagnes  
for the Holidays



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# YEAR'S BEST CHAMPAGNE

Our blind panels tasted **294** new-release Champagnes over the past 12 months. **Joshua Greene** rated **90** as exceptional (90+) and **27** as Best Buys. We present the wines by house, accompanied by background information compiled by **Caitlin Griffith**. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

## L. AUBRY FILS

Récoltant-Manipulant in Jouy-lès-Reims (Montagne de Reims); owns 34.6 acres; 27% chardonnay, 37% pinot meunier, 27% pinot noir, plus 1.23 acres each of arbanne, petit meslier and fromenteau. *Imported by Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY.*

### 92 | L. Aubry

#### **Champagne Brut Premier Cru (Best Buy)**

This tastes of pure, pale white limestone transformed into crisp yellow apple. It's appetite inducing in its zesty freshness, bright white floral notes and clean, lively length of flavor, especially if there are oysters nearby. The Aubry brothers maintain a reserve wine blend composed of vintages going back to 1998; that blend provides 50 percent of this Brut, with the other half from 2013. The varietal composition is also distinctive: pinot meunier makes up 45 percent, with chardonnay and pinot noir each providing 25 percent and the remaining five percent made up of traditional local varieties including arbanne, petit meslier and fromenteau.

**\$35.99** | reg. \$66.01

## H. BILLIOT FILS

Récoltant-Manipulant in Ambonnay (Montagne de Reims); owns 12.35 acres; 25% chardonnay, 75% pinot noir. *Imported by Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY.*

### 90 | H. Billiot Fils

**Champagne Brut Rosé Grand Cru** A blend of 75 percent pinot noir and 25 percent chardonnay, from 2011, '10 and '09, this rosé includes still red wine from the 2012 vintage. It ferments in enameled steel tanks, pointing up the red fruit richness and the juicy cranberry flavors. Touches of sweetness round it out.

**\$66.01** | reg. \$87.79

## RENE GEOFFROY

Récoltant-Manipulant in Cumières (Grande Vallée); owns 34.6 acres; 21.5% chardonnay, 37.5% pinot meunier, 41% pinot noir. *Imported by Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, NY.*

### 90 | René Geoffroy

#### **Champagne Brut Premier Cru Expression**

**(Best Buy)** This wine's ripe fruit sweetness fills its firm acidity with scents of apples and pears. It's a gentle, easy pleasure, tight and tense enough that it will benefit from a year or two in the cellar.

**\$51.49** | reg. \$68.48

## A. MARGAINE

Récoltant-Manipulant in Villers-Marmery (Montagne de Reims); owns 15.32 acres; 90% chardonnay, 10% pinot noir. *Imported by Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, NY.*

### 89 | A. Margaine

#### **Champagne 1er Cru Le Brut (Best Buy)**

With his focus on chardonnay in a village surrounded by pinot noir vines in the Montagne de Reims, Margaine grows an unusual style of Champagne. Although this is primarily made from white grapes, it smells like cherries, with a touch of clay-like earthiness and refreshing acidity. Give this six months to a year for all the elements to integrate.

**\$55.41** | reg. \$73.70