

# Cognoscenti

## WINE

### Champagne Mailly Grand Cru Mailly

Only 17 of 324 appellations in Champagne are classified *grands crus*; the champagne bottled under the name **Mailly** is all *grand cru*. The cooperative has 70 hectares in Mailly exclusively—this tight geographic focus is precisely what makes tasting here so interesting. One late spring afternoon we joined Mailly's Chef de Cave, Hervé Dantan, for an extensive sampling of its offerings. Mr. Dantan describes the style here as "not fruity, but dense with plenty of finesse and harmony." The fields from which the grapes are harvested have an unusual north-facing exposure, resulting in slightly higher acidity and more finesse. The products of this unique champagne cooperative are aged in a network of incredible chalk caves that were carved out in the 1920s, 25 meters underground and covering an area of 1.25 kilometers. Natural humidity in the caves is 95%.

The *Brut Reserve* was nicely structured and clean, its austerity rounded by hints of caramel. **Rating: 86** The *Blanc de Noirs* was a winner: silky, with good fruit, body, power and finesse. **Rating: 89** The *Brut Millésimé 1996* showed the supportive acidity considered characteristic of this vintage, a veritable *macédoine* of fruity notes, and good cellaring potential. **Rating: 91** The *Brut Rosé* was very crisp and substantial for a rosé—it could be served in accompaniment of an entire meal. **Rating: 88**

The *Cuvée L'Intemporelle Millésime 1996* is 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. We enjoyed its rich bouquet of white peaches and mangoes, along with good grape maturity. ("It's more feminine," noted Mr. Dantan.) **Rating: 91** The *Cuvée Les Échansons* (1995) is produced from Mailly's oldest vines and finest parcels. Only

5000 bottles were made in 1995; this cuvée was also made in 1996 and 1998. We noted a delicately ticklish bead along with apple and pear tones, light but intriguing minerality and fine balance. The champagne would go well with rich products like *foie gras*, lobster, or even cigars. **Rating: 92**



"We make wines with character," says Mr. Danton. "These wines are not very easy to drink, you have to think about them. We want people to taste our champagnes as they would a wine." They are indeed refined, elegant, demanding—and well worth the trouble.

This article was written by staff members of *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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#### Champagne Mailly Grand Cru

28, rue de la Libération

BP 1

51500 Mailly Champagne

France

Ph: 33 (0)3-26-49-41-10

Web: [www.champagne-mailly.com](http://www.champagne-mailly.com)