

Moutard Pere et Fils Grand Cuvee Brut Champagne

Which would you rather consume? A big, juicy, ripe tomato right off the farm, or one of those colorless and flavorless tomatoes that shows up in your salad when you go out to eat in January? The choice is obvious, as should your choice be when deciding between a small grower champagne or a mass produced version of the same style of wine. Would you rather drink a Chardonnay from an industry giant that pumps out 2 million cases of their product ... or a small artisanal winemaker/grower who crafts a small amount of the same grape that you love?

Grower champagnes are starting to get the respect they deserve and I believe it's partly because of the locavore farm to table movement that's been happening in our country for a while now. People want to know where their food and libation comes from, and consuming small grower champagne satisfies that curiosity. The big Champagne houses control about 95% of what comes out of the region, and while they define their house style to stay consistent, there is something lacking in the sense of place, or "terroir." Champagnes that are bottled by growers will usually be from a specific village and will be their top choice of

grapes, which obviously they won't sell to the big houses. They don't tie up capital in packaging, or "lifestyle" marketing or glossy full page ads, or product placement on TV or movies, so you are strictly paying for the real thing.

The Moutard grande cuvee is 100% pinot noir that tastes like champenois pinot noir: it's a blend of several vintages, aged 3 years in the bottle, released in 2014. The aromas of fresh baked bread and wild strawberries invite you in, and then the bright apple and quince flavors take over. Great champagnes are characterized by a long, persistent finish, and that's where the Moutard shines. Compare it to one of the big names in champagne and you will see the difference.

(Howie Rubin of Bauer Wine & Spirits, Boston)