

## Auction Report March 2022 | Bubbly is back



**After facing notable hardships during the worst of the pandemic, a time that brought few occasions for celebration, the Champagne region has bounced back better than ever. Its average bottle price at auction is second only to the unstoppable Burgundy, and between grandes maisons, cutting-edge producers, and cuvées from defunct domains, there's plenty to get stuck into.**

### Bubbly is back

For a bit of context, there were some nice surprises for Champagne in our overall auction results for 2021. Whilst the region saw a 6% drop in volume sold, the value auctioned rose by 9%, placing it in 4<sup>th</sup> position for the year's ranking. This positive performance caused a 16% jump in the region's

average bottle price from €157 in 2020 to €182. This is what we found in our analysis for the recently released annual Barometer, and you can find out more about the publication here.

Since the start of 2022, this interest in Champagne's most prestigious bottles has continued with great enthusiasm on the part of keen bidders. Historical names like Anselme Selosse (2008 Extra-Brut, €3,720, +38%) and his son Guillaume (Au-Dessus du Gros Mont, €570) have certainly held their own of late. Whilst the well-established names are still performing well, we can't deny a shift in the auction landscape for this famous fizz.

The work of producers such as Pierre Péters and Ulysse Colin, for example, are more than worthy of our attention. The former is run by Rodolphe Péters who, according to La Revue du vin de France, has "without a doubt soared to the top, among the region's finest blanc de blancs stylists". Perfect knowledge of his terroirs, a hawk's eye for detail, and meticulous vinification of his Mesnil-sur-Oger Chardonnay result in highly precise Champagne cuvées. A magnum of Les Chétillons, for example, fetched €930 in March 2022, a winning bid that illuminates the producer's searing auction success at the moment. As for Ulysse Colin, this vintner learnt the tricks of the trade from none other than Anselme Selosse himself! Seasoned fans of Colin appreciate his biodynamic methods, but they have to be quick to get their hands on this rare produce; a bottle of the 2014 Les Enfers cuvée went under the hammer for €446 last month.

## Rarity has a price

Looking at the recent results from all regions, rarity is the biggest common factor in the most impressive hammer prices across the board. The Loire Valley still has some outstanding figures in its midst, big figures like Clos Rougeard, the unmatched master of Saumur-Champigny. In recent auctions, though, we've seen a certain buzz around another appellation, Sancerre, represented by cuvées from Dagueneau, François Cotat (2001 La Grande Côte, €136, +13%), and Edmond Vatan, particularly since the latter's passing in January of this year (2010 Clos la Néore, €449, +45%).

## Cutting-edge estates stand their ground

Bordeaux's grands crus classés, Burgundy's Avenay, Leroy, Bizot, and Truchot, and the Rhône's Rayas and Jamet estates; a list of fine properties that continue to perform immensely well thus far this year. Highly renowned blue-chip wines haven't lost a drop of their prestige. Nevertheless, this hasn't prevented other estates from making a name for themselves on the auction market, and there are several trailblazing producers whose bottles fetched top dollar bids in March. Among them is La Grande Colline in Cornas, a domain founded in 2001 by Japanese winemaker Hirotake Ooka, who learnt his skills from Thierry Allemand. The estate closed its doors in 2017, when Ooka headed back to his native country...the wines, though, are still around of course, and they attract plenty of interest at auction. In the Jura, it's impossible to miss the success of Domaine des Miroirs (vin de France Le Berceau, €1,081, +20%) and Domaine des Murmures (vin de France Poulsard, €744, +28%). Mito Inoué is becoming a star of Auvergne, with the 2017 vin de France La Vague fetching €372 (+50%), and further south, Roussillon's Pèdres Blanques 2017 vin de France went under the hammer for €211, a value increase of 102%, no less!

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