

Written by

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Tasting 2002 champagnes blind



See also 2002 champagnes and other fizzes.

One thing I find very difficult, as really astute visitors to this website may have noticed, is to host a tasting and also give the wines shown the attention they deserve [...] It's a question of giving priority to keeping the pace and patter going and forfeiting those moments of deep concentration that any decent assessment requires. This is a particular problem when the tasting is blind, and when it is also necessary to fiddle with one's smartphone throughout. This is also the reason for the lack of suggested drinking dates in my reviews of those wines.

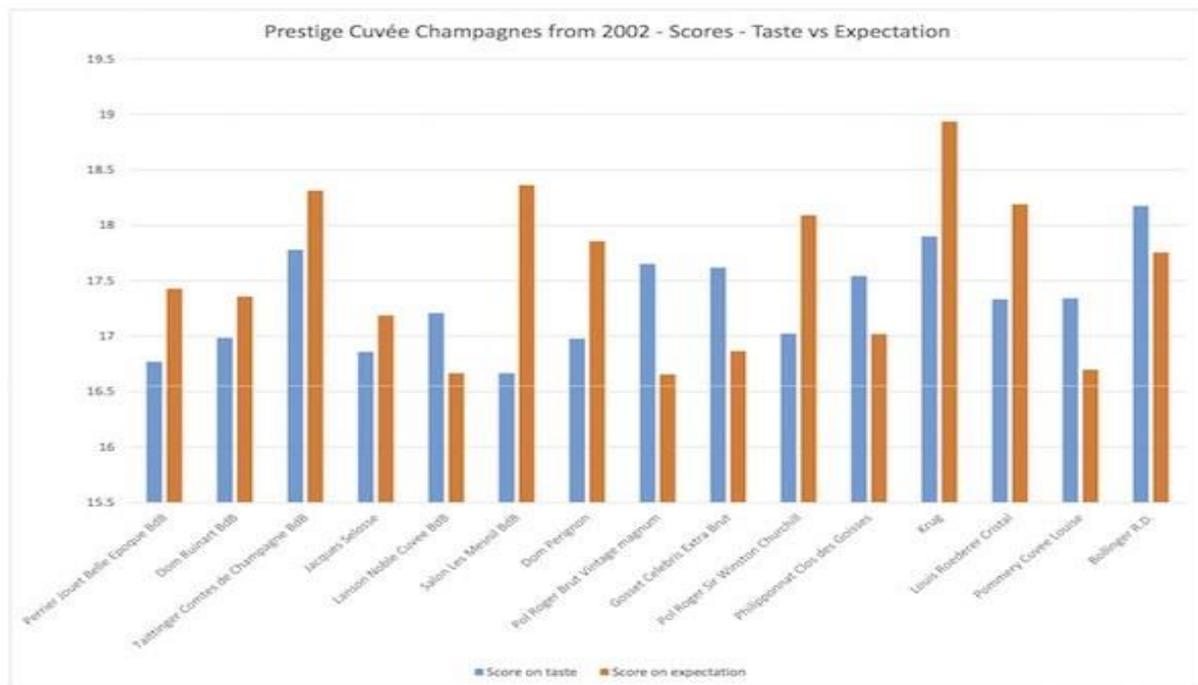
All of which preamble is my excuse for a lamentable performance at The Finest Bubble's latest champagne tasting extravaganza at 67 Pall Mall in London. It was a tasting of 15 great wines, prestige champagnes from the great 2002 vintage that is drinking beautifully now. I correctly identified only four of the wines. And then the whole thing was rather skewed by particularly puzzling performances by Salon 2002 and Cristal 2002. But then no one got more than nine right and that, I am delighted to report, was a fellow wine writer, Giles Fallowfield [...]

The way it worked was that we all knew which wines would be included, and that the first six would be Blanc de Blancs. For each wine we all provided a score and an attempt at identification via our smartphones. After each pair had been served and scored, I was handed a bit of paper that revealed the

identity of those wines. This means that towards the end, the odds shortened on identifying the wine correctly – except that even with such a famous wine as Krug 2002 when it had to be one of the last five shown (the final flight was a trio), only one single taster nailed it. Below is me laughing hysterically at one of the cribs handed to me at the end of a flight.



What was particularly interesting was to compare the scores that people gave liquids that they thought were wine X (score on expectation in orange) and the scores they gave when actually tasting wine X (score on tasting in blue). As you can see, wines such as Lanson Noble Cuvée, vintage Pol in magnum, Gosset Celebris, Philipponnat Clos des Goisses, Pommery Cuvée Louise and Bollinger RD performed much, or even, better than expected, while most of the most famous names disappointed expectations.



Below are the average scores given by the group to each wine and they pretty vividly demonstrate the underperformance of the Salon. What's very interesting is how very much better the magnum of regular

vintage Pol did than the bottles of its much more expensive big brother Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill, inspiring Nick Baker of The Finest Bubble to consider putting on a blind comparison of regular vintage champagnes with their de luxe counterparts in top vintages, which sounds completely up my boulevard. NB the provenance of the wines is given as part of the background information in italics in the tasting notes below.

1. Bollinger R.D. (Avg 18.2)
2. Krug (Avg 17.9)
3. Taittinger Comtes de Champagne BdB (Avg 17.8)
4. Pol Roger Brut Vintage magnum (Avg 17.7)
5. Gosset Celebris Extra Brut (Avg 17.6)
6. Philipponnat Clos des Goisses (Avg 17.5)
7. Pommery Cuvee Louise (Avg 17.3)
8. Louis Roederer Cristal (Avg 17.3)
9. Lanson Noble Cuvee BdB (Avg 17.2)
10. Pol Roger Sir Winston Churchill (Avg 17)
11. Dom Perignon (Avg 17)
12. Dom Ruinart BdB (Avg 17)
13. Jacques Selosse (Avg 16.9)
14. Perrier Jouet Belle Epoque BdB (Avg 16.7)
15. Salon Les Mesnil BdB (Avg 16.7)

[...]

BLIND TASTING OF PRESTIGE 2002s

- Bollinger, RD Extra Brut 2002 Champagne
Disgorged October 2014. RS 4 g/l. 60% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay. From Bollinger's UK agent Mentzendorff.
Tasted blind. Dark gold. Mushrooms (a mature Bollinger trademark), savour and density with a dry finish. Definitely Bollinger RD. Some refinement too. Reminds me a little of a fine sake – umami?