

# NICOLAS FEUILLATTE

## A ROSÉ CHAMPAGNE FOR EVERY PALATE

by Giles Fallowfield



Jean-Pierre Vincent, cellar master

Given such a broad palette of flavours he is seriously spoiled for choice and the range of wines produced at Nicolas Feuillatte is large, partly because it can be. Vincent is a particular fan of Rosé and produces no fewer than four different cuvées of Rosé Champagne, each made in a very different style. They range in colour from a pale orange-pink through copper-pink to a light ruby red, something more akin to the Pinot Noir based reds found just to the south in Burgundy.

Jean-Pierre Vincent, the cellar master at Nicolas Feuillatte, is the envy of most winemakers in Champagne. Centre Vinicole Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte (CVCNF) is the largest co-operative in the region and has more than 5,000 growers associated with it. They supply the CVCNF based in Chouilly at the northern end of the Côte des Blancs with 2,225 hectares spread right across the appellation's vineyards. Vincent has access to 281 different crus from the appellation's 321. This includes no fewer than 13 of the 17 Grands Crus vineyards, and 33 of the 42 Premiers Crus sites.

### EVOKES FRESH RED FRUITS

If there is a Nicolas Feuillatte house style and colour for Rosé it is exemplified by Brut Classic, says Vincent, "which is a copper-toned, delicately salmon-pink. The shade remains consistent over time, even after four years. The Classic Brut Rosé, the flagship brand, should evoke fresh red fruits." It's made from a blend of all three main varieties found in Champagne: "10% Chardonnay for elegance and finesse, 60% Pinot Noir for roundness and structure and 30% Pinot Meunier for fruit quality." Fresh and fruity, he sees

it as the ideal aperitif style though it could be used in a simple cocktail. It's made from a blend of 20-50 different crus, with around 20% vinified as red wine a 50/50 mix of the two pinots, and unusually, partly to emphasize the fruit character, this is made by the carbonic maceration method.

### EARLIEST VINTAGE ON RECORD

The Brut Rosé vintage Rosé is currently the very particular 2003 vintage (moving on to 2004 later in the year) when a very hot and dry August led to Champagne's earliest ever harvest of

record with very rich, ripe fruit as a consequence and lower levels of acidity than normal. Vincent remembers that in Sezanne and the southernmost part of Champagne in Côte de Bars villages like les Riceys, many of the grapes became like raisins. "Low acidity levels are not a problem for me," says Vincent. "I remember the great and ripe vintages of '47, '59, '76 and '82, all wines that also aged very well."

### FULLER, WEIGHTIER STYLE

A very similar blend to the NV Brut Rosé with extra ageing and the peculiarities of the '03 vintage this is a fuller, weightier style. "After three or four years more ageing the vintage Rosé is less in the fruity spectrum of flavours and has more jammy, marmalade notes," says Vincent. "Delicious as an aperitif but even better to accompany a meal."

### VINS DE CHEF DE CAVE

Cuvée 225 Rosé 2004 vintage is a different blend and style of pink Champagne wine and it's made in using base wines fermented in Burgundy style oak barrels not to make it oaky per se but to lend it additional complexity of flavour and texture. "The whole idea of Cuvée 225 was born in 1997," says

### FOOD AND WINE MATCHING:

#### Brut Rosé vintage 2004:

While still relatively youthful and fresh this wine is good all the year round as an aperitif. As it warms in the glass and its roundness becomes more apparent, it can also be served with fresh red fruits to form a great summer partnership.

#### Cuvée 225 Rosé vintage 2004:

The harmony of the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir makes it the perfect match for quail, truffle salad, roast rack of lamb, veal scallops with morel mushrooms or a potato, salmon and caviar crepe. This Champagne would also be a delightful match with hard cheeses. Rounded and fruity, it can also be enjoyed on its own.



Vincent, "and in 2004 we decided to do a pink version. Well we knew we had some very good Rosé material from that harvest so we decided to make two vintaged styles and this is definitely one of the vins de chef de cave."

### HEDONISTIC CUVÉE

Vincent describes this wine as a "hedonistic cuvee. Each cru is individually barrel-fermented in oak, and the wine undergoes extensive cellaring, bringing great purity to the blend. It must never be forgotten that Champagne is, above all else, a wine." The decision to barrel ferment in oak is, he says, inextricably linked to the desire to create a distinctive wine. "The blend is Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in equal parts, plus 15-20% red wine.

Crus used include Verzenay, Bouzy, Louvois and Aÿ for Pinot Noir and Chouilly, Avize, Cuis and Cramant for Chardonnay but there is also a Côte des Bars component.

"Highly expressive Pinot Noir imparts red fruit aromas, gives body to the blend and promotes good length on the palate, whilst boasting a delicate structure. The initial notes develop impressive fullness, attaining great harmony as the wine ages. The Chardonnay reveals complex, intense aromas and lends elegance and finesse. The slow evolution of the Chardonnay assists the ageing process of the wine. The oak barrels used for fermentation have previously been used as many as three or four times for white Burgundy. "It was important they had been used for



### BRUT ROSÉ

Copper-tinged salmon-pink in colour, this wine is the perfect partner for life's special moments.

**BLEND:** 10% Chardonnay, 60% Pinot Noir, and 30% Pinot Meunier.

**CRUS:** 20 - 50 meticulously selected crus make up the blend.

**APPEARANCE:** Copper-tinged salmon-pink with glints of silver and a perfectly balanced ribbon of fine bubbles.

**NOSE:** Initially subtle on the nose showing red fruit aromas, it evolves into an intense bouquet effusing blueberries, black currants and raspberries.

**PALATE:** Smooth and extremely delicate, underpinned with a very fine bubbles.

**BEST SERVED** at 7-8 °C.



### BRUT ROSÉ VINTAGE 2004

This cuvée is a favoured companion for all memorable occasions.

**BLEND:** 10% Chardonnay, 60% Pinot Noir, and 30% Pinot Meunier.

**APPEARANCE:** Copper red in colour with glints of terracotta tiles, the wine is wonderfully bright and cut with a delicate mousse.

**NOSE:** Extremely delicate on the nose, attractive and fleeting aromas of boiled sweets are swiftly replaced by a bouquet of red fruits, weighted towards raspberries and strawberries.

**PALATE:** The wine is fresh and delicate and the flavours of red fruits develop into red currant nuances with a hint of acidity. The pleasure of drinking is by no means compromised by the fizz and crackle of the bubbles, but contributes instead to an overriding thirst-quenching sensation.

**BEST SERVED** at 6-7°C.

Chardonnay, and that they had already acquired some age. Too young would mean too much oak, which in turn would create imbalance in the wine.”

“The oak contributes to the evolution of the wine and plays an important role in developing its taste profile. It imparts oak aromas, which give rich and concentrated wines. In addition, barrel fermentation in oak makes it possible to select each cru meticulously, thus magnifying the character of each grape variety. It’s Champagne destined for fine dining, it enhances select, gastronomic and refined dishes, including game, truffles, lamb, veal with Morel mushrooms, salmon and caviar, but is also the surprise accompaniment to dandelion salad with lardons or Chaource cheese”, suggests Vincent.

**TOP OF THE RANGE**

Palmes d’Or Rosé 2003 is a top of the range cuvée that’s definitely wine first and Champagne second and it’s made by the maceration or saignée method. There’s no Chardonnay in the blend it’s pure Pinot Noir. Normally it’s made for a 50/50 blend of Pinot Noir from Bouzy in the Montagne de Reims and Les Riceys in the Côte des Bars but with this 2003 vintage, Vincent

**FOOD AND WINE MATCHING:**

by **Fabrice Sommier, Meilleur Ouvrier de France Sommelier 2007 and Master Sommelier, Union de la Sommellerie Française:** If pairing them with food, master sommelier Fabrice Sommier suggests five combinations.

**Brut Rosé**

- The classic: raspberry charlotte
- The unexpected: salmon coulibiac
- The European: sweet goat’s cheese fritters
- The Asian: caramelised pork
- The American: strawberry cookies

**Palmes d’Or Rosé vintage 2003:**

- The classic: Millefeuille of tomatoes with salmon and caviar
- The unexpected: Veal sweetbread duo (braised and “meunière”)
- The European: Salmon tartar wrapped in a smoked salmon crepe
- The Asian: Peking duck in a honey and spice sauce
- The American: Lightly grilled Cuban rock lobster



explains, “the Bouzy component has been raised to 60% because the Les Riceys wines were too overpowering”.

**VOLNAY WITH BUBBLES**

There is more than a hint of red Burgundy about it, as Vincent says: “The vinosity and structure likens it to the finest Burgundy Pinot Noirs in style, with a layer of sensuality thrown in for good measure. It’s like a Volnay with bubbles. The 2003 vintage is without doubt one of the most complex and unexpected vintages in the history of

French winemaking.” The impression of Burgundy is enhanced by the cherry red colour and the intense rich, red fruit and spicy aromas yet it retains surprising freshness. “Far from being overpowered by the sunny vintage, this cuvée shows that a combination of power and freshness often delivers the best results.”

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**CUVÉE 225 ROSÉ VINTAGE 2004**

**BLEND:** 40% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir and 20% red wine.

**APPEARANCE:** The dazzling appearance of this pronounced and eclectic copper-red Rosé flatters the eye. The appetising colour is brought to life with a mass of delicate bubbles. The mischievous and continuous effervescence pirouettes on the palate. Impressive limpidity.

**BOUQUET:** The first bouquet develops a complex backbone dominated by red and black fruits: strawberries, raspberries, black currant and blueberries, and spices, such as pepper, gradually replaced by a second bouquet, boasting more direct notes revealing magnificent directness. The bouquet is already quite delicious.

**PALATE:** After a subtle hint of tannin, the palate soon acquires an enchanting finesse. The depth of the wine bodes extremely well. The attack is round, unveiling a vinous character, where freshness and elegance prevail, bringing magnificent length.

**BEST SERVED** at 11-13 °C.



**OLIVIER FLOSSE AND FEUILLATTE ROSÉS**

**THE WINE DIRECTOR OF MARC USA (MARLON ABELA RESTAURANT CORPORATION) TALKS ABOUT NICOLAS FEUILLATTE ROSÉS.**

Olivier Flosse offers a wealth of experience garnered in France, in UK and in New York. Born and raised in Marseille, Olivier started his training at a young age, earning the coveted DUAD in Bordeaux, one of the most prestigious wine tasting diploma in Europe. He first came to New York in 1999 as the assistant to Jean-Luc Le Du at Restaurant Daniel. He then was the wine director and sommelier at Café Boulud, where he oversaw a cellar of 10,000 bottles. At MARC, Olivier’s role is to oversee the buying of all wines for the restaurant group: 2 properties in New York and 2 in New England, and growing. Maybe his most important goal is to ensure his guests’ happiness and enjoyment of their dining experience, offering exceptional and rewarding food and wine pairings. Olivier recently had the occasion to showcase his mastery when he welcomed Jean-Pierre Vincent for a tasting of all the Champagnes from Nicolas Feuillatte at A Voce Columbus, his gorgeous Manhattan restaurant overlooking Central Park.

**How many years have you been familiar with the brand and how did you discover it?**

Since at least 15 years, when I was still in France. I was at a wedding of an Italian countess and a very rich man, who was 25 years older than her. It was at the hotel-restaurant La Chèvre d’Or in Eze on the Cote d’Azur. I was involved in the organization of this wedding. Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte was flowing for 5 days.

**How do you define the style of Nicolas Feuillatte?**

Very feminine, delicate and refined/ According to me, Nicolas Feuillatte represents the true quality of Champagne, not only de-

pending on a name. A very good quality at a very good value and a great price.

**Tell us about the non-vintage Cuvée Rosé or about another Rosé that you enjoy in the Nicolas Feuillatte range:**

Nicolas Feuillatte Brut Non Vintage Rosé is a Champagne to be served when inviting a woman. A nose of ripe red fruit, slightly animal. It’s definitely a Champagne for pleasure. Palmes d’Or Rosé Vintage 2002 has a totally different style, which is revealed when served with certain dishes. Exuberant nose. I would suggest the Palmes d’Or Rosé Vintage on very special occasions.

**What dish would you match with**

**Champagne Rosés?**

The best matching for champagne is the matching of people. The best dish: a good friendship. Have good moments of pleasure with the beloved person.

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**PALMES D’OR ROSÉ VINTAGE 2003**

Expressive and smooth

**BLEND:** 50% Pinot Noir from Bouzy selected for its powerfulness and 50% Pinot Noir from Riceys, for its remarkable character and aromas.

**APPEARANCE:** Cherry-red and brilliant in appearance. A delicate ring of bubbles forms on the surface, with an elegant stream of fine bubbles rising in the glass.

**NOSE:** Sophisticated and intense primary aromas, revealing strawberries and raspberries, with a hint of vanilla and liquorice. Secondary aromas are more intense, with added red fruit aromas and spices such as pepper and tonka beans.

**PALATE:** Impressive attack bringing with it the sensation of richness and intensity. Tender and delicate on the finish, with pervading flavours of fruit and spices, elegant, delicate tannins and surprising freshness.

**BEST SERVED** at 10-12°C.