



BY APPOINTMENT TO  
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN  
WINE MERCHANTS  
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED  
LONDON



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HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES  
WINE MERCHANTS  
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# CORNEY & BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-178



## CHAMPAGNE SALON

2004 VINTAGE

EXCLUSIVE TO CORNEY & BARROW IN THE UK

# CHAMPAGNE SALON 2004

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Salon is unique and singular; the original blanc de blancs, the pioneer of a style for all time. Rare and fine, Cuvée 'S' is the ultimate insider's champagne, one with a certain glamour but without ostentation; a wine that stands alone.

Salon 2004 – only the 39<sup>th</sup> vintage ever released from this iconic and tiny champagne house – bears all Salon's hallmarks: the purity and precision, the poise and the perfume. It is also extremely rare: the 2004 growing season in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger led to an even smaller harvest than usual at Salon. We have only 4200 bottles of this wine to offer.



Maxim's Restaurant



Aimé's beloved Hispano Suiza J12



Eugène-Aimé Salon, c.1930s



Style and elegance of the 1920s Paris



# THE STORY OF SALON

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The story of Salon's creator, Eugène-Aimé Salon, reads like a picaresque novel, a tale of rags-to-riches – or in this case: furs. The child of a cart-maker from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, the young Aimé Salon left for Paris, finding work for a fur merchant, where he rose from messenger boy to managing director, making the company and himself a sizeable fortune in the process. Work hard, play hard? Aimé Salon mixed the two assiduously... Very much the *bon vivant* as well as shrewd businessman, enthralled by Paris and its glittering social circuit, he even had his own table at Maxim's, the hottest address of the time, where he would meet clients and lovers alike. He was also passionate about champagne and apparently consumed a great deal of it in the company of his glamorous friends. And this is where the improbable story of Cuvée 'S' began.

Some say that Aimé Salon decided to create this champagne for his own amusement, or for a bet, or to impress his contemporaries - who could possibly have the cash, the connections or the insider's skill to produce a champagne with their name on it? Others believe the story of the eccentric and aesthete, determined to create the perfect champagne; either way, it is clear that this became something of an obsessive project. Aimé Salon returned home to Le Mesnil-sur-Oger to consult with his brother-in-law Marcel Guillaume, a cellar master. It was he who explained to Aimé Salon the special nature of Le Mesnil's soils, the exceptional acid profile of its grapes, and their potential to yield wines of great power, purity, and longevity. At this point perhaps, had anyone other than Aimé been driving the project, Cuvée S might never have happened. For this was the land of the chardonnay grape, very much second fiddle to pinot noir back then; nobody had ever made a champagne exclusively from chardonnay, any more than they would consider making a wine from a single vintage or vineyard! Fortunately, for us, Aimé Salon lived by his own rules.

And so the quest began, with chardonnay the new muse. Marcel's little black book of vineyards and vigneronns was plundered and Aimé Salon set to work on an exacting plan. Just imagine the incongruity of it: the Parisian entrepreneur down from town, gliding past horse and cart in his gleaming Hispano Suiza J12, treading the vineyards in his shiny city shoes, treading

the vineyards in pursuit of the finest plots, the most favourable gradient, the purest chalk. He developed an exacting google-worthy algorithm to rate each harvest, based on fruit ripeness, character, acid profile and balance. Had the grapes attained the Salon standard? One year in three, more or less; Salon was unflinching in rejecting a harvest he judged to be less than perfect. In the cellar, yet more criteria: only the purest juice would be used from the first pressings, the rest cast aside. Next: the lengthy *prise de mousse* and maturation - which can surely only have been trial and error at the beginning: try a bottle, wait a bit, try again, wait a bit longer, eventually reach conclusion that said wine requires a minimum of 10 years in a dark room lying horizontal in the intimate company of its spent yeast lees. This was one of Aimé's great achievements: he understood that chardonnay's firm, taut structure could indeed attain greatness and finesse, but that only time would confer the charm, curve and allure. In creating Salon, he was to transform the perception of chardonnay itself in the world of champagne.

1905 marked Aimé Salon's first vintage, produced in tiny quantities to share with friends and family, who eventually persuaded him to expand it into a commercial venture. So in 1911, Aimé Salon bought his first vineyard – the single hectare plot now known as *Le Jardin de Salon* – from which Salon is still made, along with some 20 other exceptional vineyard parcels dotted across Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. The 1911 vintage was launched in 1921, at Maxim's of course, where it was poured as the House champagne. It was here, in the heady atmosphere of 1920s and 30s Paris, that the wine's reputation was made, and it continued to be sold here exclusively until the 1950s.

A single terroir - the Côte des Blancs, a single *cru* - the *grand cru* Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, a single grape - Chardonnay, a single vintage, and time – Salon is the legacy of a very singular man indeed. Thanks in no small part to Didier Depond, the similarly dynamic and charismatic President of Champagne Salon and its sister house Champagne Delamotte since 1997, the exacting methods developed by Aimé Salon continue to be upheld to this day. Salon Cuvée S is made from only the most exceptional vintages, in small quantities, and released only after at least a decade's ageing.

# VINTAGE NOTES

“2004 - le millésime de la sérénité”  
“2004 - the serenity vintage”



**DIDIER DEPOND**

President, Champagne Salon Champagne Delamotte

Spring 2004 was slow to get started, the vineyards and growers still reeling from the rollercoaster of the preceding year and its extraordinary heatwave conditions. This was to prove a significant factor for the 2004 vintage, as low ground water levels meant warmer soils, promoting growth and minimising disease. By mid-June, fine weather at flowering, together with zero incidence of spring frost, made for an extremely impressive fruit set. In fact, the crop load looked so abundant that the Salon team took the rare decision to carry out a *vendange vert* (green harvest) to thin the crop, in the interests of fruit concentration and balance. Conditions turned for the worse at this point: August was dismal, rainy and cold, delaying the ripening process and threatening to upset a promising harvest. In the end, this hiatus prolonged the ripening season for the better, promoting the development of delicate aromatics and fruit structure. Fortunately, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September the weather set fair: Glorious sunshine and warmth brought the grapes to an astonishing level of richness, while plunging night-time temperatures preserved perfectly their pristine acidities; all elements in precise balance.

**REBECCA PALMER**

March 2016

# TASTING NOTES

I was surprised, on first tasting Salon 2004 (December 2015), that the wine seemed – how can I put it? – so pleased to be in the glass. Salon can be austere early on, tightly wrapped, tantalisingly impenetrable; but if ever there were an exception to prove this rule, 2004 is it. There is something immediately decadent, carefree, and provocative about this wine. It has a ready charge of scents, enticing as always: feminine and discreetly exotic, wafting jasmine as it goes, then a flash of flint struck hard, then the tang of the sea. Taut and crystalline in the mouth, the wine is clean as a blade with a tonic, saline edge; its mousse creamy yet somehow simultaneously weightless, all-enveloping and almost implausibly fine. In the glass, with air and time, the wine shows a hint of its future potential: smooth, toned chardonnay curve, layering delicate pear fruit, soft brioche, fresh yeast. All purity and tension, grace and poise, this is a serene and classic Salon, more approachable now than many vintages, and with a lengthy future ahead.

Corney & Barrow Score 19

£1450/ case of 6, in bond UK

A very limited number of magnums are available.  
Please speak to one of the team for more details.

## DRINKING DATES

We are often asked our opinion on specific drinking dates for Salon and pleased to provide recommendations as follows:

| Vintage | Drink date   |
|---------|--|
| 1982    | Now to 2030  |
| 1983    | Now to 2020<br>At absolute peak now<br>(Magnums will drink to 2030+) |
| 1985    | Now to 2030 (magnum to 2040)   |
| 1988    | Now to 2030 (magnum to 2040)   |
| 1990    | Now to 2040 (magnum to 2040)   |
| 1995    | Now to 2050 (magnum to 2060)   |
| 1996    | Now to 2050+ (magnum to 2060+)                                       |
| 1997    | Now to 2040 (magnum to 2050)   |
| 1999    | Now to 2050+ (magnum to 2060+)                                       |
| 2002    | Now to 2060+ (magnum to 2070+)                                       |
| 2004    | Now to 2050+ (magnum to 2060+)                                       |

*“A single terroir - the Côte des Blancs, a single cru- the grand cru Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, a single grape - Chardonnay, a single vintage, and time – Salon is the legacy of a very singular man indeed.”*

REBECCA PALMER





Maxim's restaurant menu, c.1920s

# TO ORDER

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