



## Enjoying Champagne

by Master Sommelier Catherine Fallis  
Planet Grape

### Storage

Store Champagne in a cool, dark place away from heat, light, vibrations and severe temperature variations. Champagne is ready to drink upon release, and, for the most part, does not improve with age. Bottles do not need to be stored on their sides.

### Chilling

Before serving, chill the wine well but do not freeze it. Place the bottle in a bucket filled with ice and just enough water to make a "thick soup" for 30 minutes. Better yet, always keep a chilled bottle in the fridge just in case.

### Opening

The pressure in a bottle of Champagne is equivalent to that of a bus tire, or about 90 pounds per square inch. Slant the bottle at a 45 degree angle away from guests. Put a thumb on the cork, untwist and loosen the wire muzzle.

Grasp the cork firmly, twist the bottle slowly and let the pressure help ease out the cork while maintaining greater pressure on it. A maiden's sigh is the sound to aim for, not a loud pop.

### Sabering

In times of triumph French officers under Louis XIV, and later, Napoleon's gallant soldiers - the Hussars - opened Champagne with a strong blow from their swords.

Napoleon is known to have said, "*Champagne! In victory one deserves it; in defeat one needs it.*" The tradition continues, though French cavalymen often practice on beer bottles first. Once they have mastered the technique, they show their skill by riding at full gallop past ladies holding up bottles of Champagne for them to saber.

This is a spectacular start to weddings, feasts, formal dinners, and other special occasions. The author is a professional sabreuse and performs regularly.

## **Enjoying Champagne - Continued**

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### **Service**

Serve in tall flute or tulip glasses at a temperature of 42-47 degrees or to your liking. Pour a small amount into the glass, allow the bubbles to liquefy, then top up to about 2/3 full. An interesting custom involves drinking Champagne from a lady's slipper or high-heeled pump.

If you enjoy coupes, by all means use them. Gas will dissipate much more quickly, but in this case the taste of the base wine comes to the fore.

### **What to do with Leftovers**

Champagne stoppers are the only way to fully protect the gas. Interestingly, some Champagnes taste fuller and more mellow the next day.

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