

# UNDERSTANDING AND RECOMMENDING CHAMPAGNE



COMITÉ  
CHAMPAGNE



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## 1 . INTRODUCTION

The Comité Champagne is responsible for defending and promoting the Champagne appellation on behalf of the winegrowers and Champagne houses it represents.

We have been organising training initiatives for more than 80 years.

Promoting the value and uniqueness of Champagne is one of our fundamental missions.

Because our content is the result of a consensus between all of Champagne's producers, following our training courses ensures a holistic vision of Champagne.

Holders of the « Champagne Specialist: understanding and recommending Champagne » certificate have successfully demonstrated the mastery of various skills in the field of Champagne wines.

Appearing on a curriculum vitae or other document, the certificate highlights the skills acquired during the training. Employers may also appreciate and value this demonstration of interest in the field of Champagne.

This document, intended for learners and partner training centres, contains all the relevant information about the « Champagne Specialist: understanding and recommending Champagne » certification. It sets out the objectives and contents of the training, and the assessment procedures.

## 2 . PRESENTATION OF THE « CHAMPAGNE SPECIALIST: UNDERSTANDING AND RECOMMENDING CHAMPAGNE » TRAINING

### a. Who is this certification for?

- Wine merchants, sommeliers, restaurant professionals, food distribution professionals and executives, buyers and sales personnel in the wine and spirits industry, professionals in the winegrowing industry, professionals in wine tourism, wine journalists, importers, wine trainers, students in the hotel and restaurant industry and in the luxury industry,
- And, more generally, anyone seeking expertise in the field of recommending Champagne wines.

### b. Objectives of the certification:

- Understanding and interpreting Champagne wine labels,
- Having the ability to describe and assess Champagne wines,
- Knowing how to store and serve Champagne wines in optimal conditions,
- Being able to recommend a Champagne wine by ascertaining a customer's expectations and requirements and then making a range of proposals suited to their request,
- Knowing how to pair food and Champagne wines.

### c. Prerequisites:

Acquiring the skills covered by this course involves a minimum of 21 hours' work, consisting of:

- A minimum of seven hours of preparatory work,
- Fourteen hours of supervised learning.

The supervised learning time includes four sessions with a trainer and the examination.

The preparation prior to the supervised sessions consists of:

- Obtaining certificate for levels 2 or 3 of the Champagne Education E-Learning ([www.champagne.education](http://www.champagne.education)).
- Thorough reading of the « Understanding and recommending Champagne » training booklet.

Candidates must have reached the minimum legal drinking age in the country where the training is being given.

### d. Contents of the training:

The training is divided into four sessions. Each one includes **a participatory workshop** to put the knowledge acquired into practice. These workshops play a key role in the training programme.

#### Session 1 - General information, tasting, pairing food and Champagne:

- Champagne, a source of inspiration,
- Location of Champagne and the Champagne appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC),
- Actors in the appellation,
- History,
- Defence of the Champagne appellation,
- Tasting techniques,
- Pairing food and Champagne,
- Practical application: **the « Perfect Pairing » workshop**.

#### Session 2 - The Champagne terroir:

- Climate, topography, subsoil,
- Grape varieties,
- Winegrowing characteristics,
- Harvests,
- Practical application: **Champagne game**.

#### Session 3 - The *méthode champenoise* (« Champagne method »):

- Pressing,
- Vinification,
- Blending,
- Production of Rosé Champagne,
- Bottling and secondary fermentation,
- Champagne cellars,
- Ageing,
- Riddling, disgorgement,
- Dosage,
- Corking, shaking and final inspection,
- Practical application: **the « Cellar Master » workshop**.

#### Session 4 - Recommendations, service and storage:

- Recommending a Champagne,
- Types of Champagne,
- Labels and information,
- Bottle sizes,
- Before service,
- Glasses,
- Opening the bottle,
- Service,
- Storage,
- Practical application: **the « Wine Merchant » workshop**.

3 . CHAMPAGNE WINE PROFILES RECOMMENDED FOR THE TASTING SESSIONS

Session 1:

- Three non-vintage brut Champagne wines (different producers, different dosages, different regions, aged in stainless steel or wood, etc.).

Session 2:

- A Blanc de Blancs Champagne,
- A Blanc de Noirs Champagne,
- A “Cuvée de Prestige”.

Session 3:

- Two vintage Champagne wines (one more than 10 years old),
- A Rosé Champagne.

Session 4:

- A zero dosage Champagne,
- A Champagne with a high proportion of reserve wines (at least 40%),
- A Champagne made using a special technique (no malolactic fermentation, perpetual reserve, blended Rosé Champagne, etc.).

4 . ASSESSMENT METHODS

The examination consists of three tests carried out with closed books.

To obtain certification, candidates must score an average of at least 55%, calculated on the final marks for each of the three tests.

Test 1 - Thirty multiple-choice questions

(30 minutes – 30 points)

The aim of this test is to assess the candidate’s knowledge and understanding of the entire training programme, **including the prerequisites** (Champagne MOOC and training booklet).

For each question, there is always only one correct answer. Each correct answer scores one point. There are no penalty points. The final score for the test is the total number of points obtained by the candidate.

Test 2 - Practical case in the form of two short written answer questions

(30 minutes – 30 points)

This aim of this test is to assess the candidate’s ability to apply the knowledge acquired during the training for the entire programme. The questions require short, clear and, where appropriate, justified answers. There is no penalty for incorrect answers. The final score for the test is the total number of points obtained by the candidate.

Test 3 - Tasting of two Champagne wines

(45 minutes – 40 points)

The aim of this test is to assess the candidate’s ability to describe two Champagne wines accurately and appropriately according to the criteria on the tasting sheet used during the training.

Candidates will have access to the name of the cuvée, the name of the producer and the style of the cuvée (non-vintage brut, Blanc de Blancs, vintage, etc.).

For the nose and palate, candidates are asked to name three aromas/flavours. They can be the same or different. Candidates may indicate more than three aromas/flavours, but no extra points will be awarded.

Each correctly described criterion earns at least one point. There are no penalty points. The distribution of points is detailed in the table below.

The candidate must then make a presentation to the customer, promoting the wine with a view to selling it. Finally, the candidate must propose a harmonious food and Champagne pairing and explain their choice. The final score for the test is the total number of points obtained by the candidate.

| Criteria                              | Number of points |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| APPEARANCE                            |                  |
| Intensity                             | 1                |
| Colour                                | 1                |
| NOSE                                  |                  |
| Intensity                             | 1                |
| Aromas                                | 3                |
| PALATE                                |                  |
| Effervescence                         | 1                |
| Sweetness                             | 1                |
| Liveliness                            | 1                |
| Body                                  | 1                |
| Flavours                              | 3                |
| Finish                                | 1                |
| CONCLUSION                            |                  |
| Complexity                            | 1                |
| SUGGESTIONS                           |                  |
| Presentation of the wine              | 3                |
| Food and Champagne pairing suggestion | 2                |
| TOTAL                                 | 20               |

5 . ASSESSMENT RULES

a. Registration requirements:

- Candidates applying to register for assessment must have the minimum age required for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the examination takes place.
- Candidates should have a basic knowledge of tasting. The WSET Level 2 or 3 Award in wines and spirits, or an equivalent level of experience, is recommended for registration for the « Champagne Specialist: understanding and recommending Champagne » certificate. Candidates who consider they have sufficient knowledge of the subjects covered by the level 2 or 3 award in wines and spirits are invited to contact the partner centres to find out how to validate the required knowledge before enrolling for this training.

**b. Format of the tests and results:**

The assessment consists of three tests carried out with closed books.

- Test 1 - Thirty multiple-choice questions (30 minutes – 30 points),
- Test 2 - Two written questions with short answers, each worth 15 points (30 minutes – 30 points),
- Test 3 - Tasting of two Champagnes (45 minutes - 40 points).

To obtain certification, candidates must score an average of at least 55%, calculated on the final marks for each of the three tests.

Candidates with an average score of at least 55% will be awarded the « Champagne Specialist: understanding and recommending Champagne » certificate and will receive an overall mark for the entire examination.

Results and certificates for successful candidates will be sent to partner centres within eight weeks of receipt of copies.

Results are graded as follows:

- Less than 54%: Fail
- 55% to 69%: Pass
- 70% to 79%: Pass with merit
- More than 80%: Pass with distinction

**c. Special terms:**

Candidates with special needs requiring an adapted written examination should inform the examinations officer at their partner centre of any special requirements at the time of their registration.

The Comité Champagne's policy is that no candidates should be at a disadvantage. Candidates are responsible for informing their partner centre of any special requirements at the time of enrolment.

**d. Resitting the examination:**

Candidates may apply to resit the examination if they are unsuccessful. There is no limit on the number of attempts that may be made.

**e. Organisation of the examination and conditions:**

Candidates must accept the following conditions in order to sit the examination:

- Present an official identity document with a photograph to the supervisor.
- Write the answers in the same language as the examination paper.
- Complete the examination within the time allowed for each test.
- No consultation of any books or reference works of any kind is permitted.
- The only items available to the candidate are the question sheet, the answers grid, tasting glasses, a spittoon, pens and pencils, an eraser and a bottle of water. All other items are prohibited (watches, phones, tablets, etc.).
- As soon as the examination is declared to have started, no communication of any kind between candidates is permitted until the supervisor announces the end of the examination (or the final exit from the room).
- It is prohibited for candidates to take any photographs of the examination room or the examination materials.
- Candidates may not leave the room until fifteen minutes after the start of the examination. If they leave, they may not return.
- Candidates who arrive after the official start time will not be allowed to sit the examination if any other candidate has already left the room.
- Unless exceptionally permitted by the supervisor, candidates are not allowed to sit the examination if they arrive more than 30 minutes after the official start time.
- Candidates are not allowed to leave and return to the room once the examination has begun.
- Candidates who complete the examination early may leave the room providing they do not disturb the other candidates. Readmission is not permitted.

- Supervisors have no authority to comment upon, interpret, or express an opinion on any of the examination questions.
- Any candidate suspected of misconduct must leave the room immediately. Their copy will be examined by the Comité Champagne and the partner centre, who will determine its validity and decide whether they should be allowed to resit the examination.
- No question sheets may be taken out of the examination room. Candidates who fail to return the question sheet will be considered guilty of misconduct.
- It is prohibited for candidates to reveal the content of examination papers to others, or to reproduce it in any way.
- Candidates must comply with the instructions of the examination supervisor, failing which their results may be rendered invalid.
- Examination papers and answer sheets remain the property of the Comité Champagne and will not be returned to candidates.

**6 . COMPLAINTS**

Candidates wishing to obtain a reassessment should contact their partner centre and ask for a reassessment request form.

Once completed, this form must be sent to the Comité Champagne within twelve weeks of the examination. Any requests received after this time will not be reviewed. A response will be sent within six weeks of receipt by the Comité Champagne.

**7 . CANDIDATE SATISFACTION**

If a candidate has concerns that their partner centre has not provided the expected level of service, or has behaved in a way that is inconsistent with the standards required in terms of administration, teaching or organisation of the examination, they should first take this up with their partner centre.

If no satisfactory solution is found, the candidate should contact the Comité Champagne's education team at the following address: [education@champagne.fr](mailto:education@champagne.fr).

All complaints will be treated confidentially.

The Comité Champagne cannot act on anonymous complaints.

**8 . RIGHTS OF THE COMITÉ CHAMPAGNE**

Learners or people who have obtained the «Champagne Specialist: understanding and recommending Champagne» certification undertake not to damage the Champagne appellation or use their «Champagne Specialist» certificate to promote other appellations. In the case of misuse, the Comité Champagne reserves the right to withdraw the certification of the persons concerned.

The Comité Champagne reserves the right to add to or amend these specifications in any way it sees fit.



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*Alcohol abuse is hazardous for your health. Please enjoy responsibly*