



## LA GRANDE DAME BRUT 1996

**The Vintage:** The winter of 1996 was extremely cold, with temperatures as low as  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ , although this did not damage the vines. Spring was sunny and dry and budding began between 20 and 24 April, depending on the different grape varieties.

May was grey and chilly and many vines in the Champagne region were caught by a couple of spring frosts. The Veuve Clicquot vineyards did not suffer any damage, however, thanks to their position on hillsides that are less subject to this type of frost.

July was very dry and the grapes suffered near-drought conditions during the second fortnight. A few salutary showers at the end of August brought in ideal weather temperatures for growth. Harvesting started on 16 September for the most mature grapes; harvest conditions were excellent, with hot, dry weather prevailing.

Never in living memory could people remember such a balance between maturity and freshness: the very dry summer had naturally concentrated the grapes' components. The first tastings were extremely promising and indicated that the wine would mature exceptionally well.

**The Wine:** The basic blend is made up of 64% Pinot Noir chosen from Grand Crus in Ay in the Grand Vallée de la Marne area, and Verzenay, Verzy, Ambonnay and Bouzy in the Montagne de Reims area. The blend also includes 36% Chardonnay from three Grand Crus only: Avize, Oger and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger all in the Côte des Blancs.

**Sensory Notes:** La Grande Dame 1996 is golden in colour with light green accents, fine, light bubbles.

Initially the nose is rich and intense, evoking fresh fruit (apricots, vine peaches, citrus fruits) and dried fruits (hazelnuts, marzipan). After aeration, the nose opens up to reveal lightly toasted and mineral notes as well as aromas of mild spices and brioche.

On the palate the aromatic complexity of this champagne dominates.

The balance between the strength of Pinot Noir and the elegance of Chardonnay grapes has rarely achieved such perfect harmony.

The wine is round and generous on the palate, with a delicate and silky texture and a dynamic, sparkling final edge—very typical of the 1996 vintage.

The finish is quite remarkable, seemingly never-ending. This is a wine which constantly evolves once it is opened, revealing a gracious, pure structure, and a promise that it will mature magnificently over time.

1996 is undoubtedly one of the most vibrant versions of La Grande Dame.

Already a dazzling choice of aperitif or a special occasion, over the years it will gradually reveal a more assertive personality that will accompany the most refined dishes to perfection.