

LOUIS ROEDERER
Philippe STARCK
BRUT NATURE 2006

'The Brut Nature 2006 cuvée is the fruit of several convergences: between a historic terroir and a remarkable year, and between a Champagne House that respects nature and a creative genius with a free spirit.'

Frédéric Rouzaud, *Managing Director*

TERROIR

Brut Nature 2006 originated here, on one of the *terroirs* on the Louis Roederer Estate—a vineyard that has been patiently cultivated by the House's winegrowers and oenologists.

The work of these specialists is a veritable passion: it is based on a vision of wine that consists of a 'tailor-made' viticulture and, increasingly (over the last decade or so), the principles of biodynamic cultivation. Based on close observation of the vines and their environment, this method endeavours to respect the characteristics of each of the 410 parcels in the Louis Roederer vineyard; it also endeavours to preserve and cultivate their originality by using soil amendments, pruning, leaf thinning, the grapes' exposure to the sun, and so on. This quest for perfection, which places research and respect for the *terroir* on an equal footing, perfectly reflects Louis Roederer's philosophy: an independent Champagne House with a deep attachment to the land, as attested by its wines, which have a straightforward character, and are pure and extremely chiselled, expressing the aromas of each parcel.

AUTHENTICITY

The distinctive qualities of each parcel are the result of great respect for nature. Louis Roederer's philosophy is shared by Philippe Starck: both are engaged in a quest for authenticity.

The harvest from each parcel is pressed and vinified separately. Over the months, the wine is tasted and analysed by the oenologists; this provides them with an extensive aromatic palette that gives them a rich choice and enables them to develop blends under the watchful eye of the Cellar Master, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon. This quest for authenticity matches Philippe Starck's desire to collaborate on the development of a unique, finely tuned, and authentic cuvée. They decided to draw inspiration from river wines to create a straightforward, medium-dry, *terroir*-based champagne. Consequently, every measure was taken on the south-facing parcels of Pinot noir to nurture grapes that would attain great maturity, in order to obtain an excellent fruit that would require very minor corrective measures.

VINTAGE

The years pass and each is different from the last. The same is true of the champagne climate, which sometimes produces unusually mature harvests with a unique flavour.

2006 was unusual for several reasons. After a mild autumn in 2005, the winter weather became very cold in November. The temperature remained very low from January to April, which delayed the onset of spring and its beneficial effects on the vines. Spring began later than usual and the period was marked by several episodes of frost and long weeks of rain. The rain saturated the ground and enabled the vineyard to survive a blisteringly hot July, punctuated by violent storms; the Champagne region experienced some of the hottest weather on record. But this was followed in August by a series of exceptionally cool and rainy days followed by a sunny and dry climate in September. During the harvest period, this type of weather—alternating between contrasting temperatures and periods of rain and sun—during the key periods of the grapes' maturity produced an exceptional and very promising harvest.

A RICH WINE

When a champagne has been developed, it is complemented by a *liqueur de dosage*. However, depending on the vintage, certain champagnes require very little *dosage*—or none at all.

Blended and bottled, the wine develops its bouquet in the darkness of the cellars over several years. Riddled regularly, the wine becomes more transparent as the deposits settle in the bottlenecks. When the deposits are removed, the small quantity of wine that is necessarily lost during the operation is replaced by the *liqueur de dosage*; composed of cane sugar and reserve wines, it has to maintain the *terroir*'s authenticity. While Louis Roederer's champagnes have relatively little *dosage* added (9 to 10 grams per litre), some vintages require absolutely no additional sugar. Philippe Starck is quite adamant about his vision of the ideal champagne: 'it must be a non-dosed champagne.'

In 2006, the Pinot noir grapes from the Cumières *terroir* were exceptionally mature and had a rare depth of flavour and texture. Because of the fruitiness and richness of the grapes, the Cellar Master decided 'to allow nature to take its course' and, consequently, not to add any *dosage*. These grapes were to be the core ingredient of this new wine that had been developed with Philippe Starck. The Brut Nature 2006 cuvée was now a reality.

NATURE

The Brut Nature 2006 cuvée, developed by Louis Roederer and Philippe Starck, has a strong character: it gives full expression to and captures the spirit of its *terroir*.

The Cumières *terroir* produces intense Pinot noir with great vinosity (without malolactic fermentation) and slightly spicy notes, which is very characteristic of this village. Because of this exceptional maturity, no *dosage* was added to this cuvée. Complemented by some Chardonnays, this cuvée is ample, elegant, and extremely pure; the wine's smooth and velvety structure is combined with the remarkable freshness and fruitiness of the grapes that are characteristic of Louis Roederer's champagnes. Developed with great care—the pressure does not exceed 5 kilos—the bubbles blend into the fruit. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon suggests that it should be served at 13° at the end of the afternoon as a refreshment, as an aperitif to whet the palate, or at the end of a meal, to truly appreciate its rich flavour.

THE CUMIÈRES TERROIR

This south-facing calcareous clay *terroir* also benefits from the reflected light from the Marne River. This exceptional location produces precocious and sweet wines. Once known as 'river wines', these white wines—with their slight Burgundian accents—established the region's reputation for fine wines well before the production of champagne became the regional speciality.

COLLABORATION

Why did you both decide to work together?

Frédéric Rouzeaud. – I had always admired—and still do—Philippe's creative genius, which I became acquainted with when I saw his restaurant and hotel projects. I appreciate his unique style, which strikes the right balance between respecting the location and great freedom in his approach. When I met him for the first time, I had no preconceptions—I was simply convinced that we could and should work together. And his declaration that he only drank *non-dosé* (non-dosed) champagnes coincided with—and motivated us to continue—a project we had been concentrating on since 2003, which involved developing a different kind of wine—a Louis Roederer cuvée based on a truly authentic *terroir*. Hence, our ensuing collaboration was a very natural development.

Philippe Starck. – Other champagne houses had already contacted me, but I always turned down their offers because I felt there was something deceptive about selling a bottle marked 'Starck' without a 'Starck' contribution to the contents. I believe that with any project embarked upon, it is key to get to the heart of the matter, rather than skirt round the edges. If I had accepted to work only on the bottle's exterior, I would not have achieved something truly authentic. So, for this cuvée, I decided to get involved in the winemaking process itself to ensure that the final bottle would be the fruit of an honest process and a comprehensive collaboration in every way; I knew that this would be the only way to achieve total

coherence between the design and the contents.

What exactly was your role in the production of the cuvée?

P.S. – Initially, we discussed it at great length. I spent many hours describing my vision of the ideal champagne—a non-dosed version, of course; I created ‘Chinese portraits’ and I told the story from different points of view, using very precise words that conjured up powerful images. And the Cellar Master and his teams managed to transform these words—which act as conveyers of concepts—and this abstraction into wine, through our tastings sessions. Fortunately for me, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon masters two languages—that of words and that of wine.

F.R. – Philippe provided his more emotional, creative vision of the wine. This was enriching for us, because it gave us the creative freedom that we lacked. By interpreting his words, Philippe enabled us to go much further than we would have envisaged without his enlightening participation. The more precisely he described his vision the more precise we were able to be in producing the champagne. I remember him talking about a wine that was ‘stripped to the bone’, straightforward, and authentic—I distinctly recall these three descriptions. And his vision coincided with an approach that we had already adopted in 2003.

What do you recall about your first tasting of Brut Nature 2006?

P.R. – It was an incredible experience: the Cellar Master had succeeded in ‘translating’ my words into champagne, tastes, aromas, liquid, and bubbles. We then attended a second session, at which point I gave my response: there was virtually no need to make any corrections, merely some fine adjustments. And when we tasted the finished product, it was quite a shock: I had been carrying round a mental ‘hologram’ of this champagne for months and now it was finally here and a reality. I wanted to create a champagne with a modern elegance, without losing sight of its history and roots, and this delicate equilibrium had been magnificently attained. I felt that we had reinvented champagne because we had achieved success on a number of levels: we had invented a method that consisted of ‘translating’ the concept of the wine and the words that describe it into the creation of the wine itself. Both the champagne and its production were the result of a creative process.

F.R. – The initial tasting was indeed a moving experience. It was the materialisation of the House’s long-standing philosophy—which is being perpetuated today by the Foundation—, which involves a constant quest for creativity through research. The work of artists helps us to enrich our wines; Brut Nature 2006 is the perfect illustration of this influence, and is the fruit of several convergences: between a *terroir* with a remarkable year, and between our House and Philippe Starck, a creative genius and a free spirit.

So, in fact, Brut Nature 2006 is a champagne produced by two pairs of hands?

F.R. and P.S. – Spot on!

FREEDOM

‘The theme of the bottle of Brut Nature 2006 is really related to its contents,’ explains Philippe Starck, ‘and the contents were so potent that I decided to design a bottle that was stripped of any superfluous embellishment.’

Philippe Starck chose an untreated and unpainted tin sealing capsule, without any inscriptions, whose grey nuances would convey the cuvée’s elegance and authenticity. And the label is a water-resistant Japanese-inspired paper that can be printed and embossed. The reason: the most significant words would be highlighted in colour and the others to be simply inscribed and evocative. Together, they sum up the story of the champagne: ‘This is a Brut Nature Vintage champagne produced in 2006 by Louis Roederer and Philippe Starck in Reims, France’. This perfectly expresses their quest for the elegance of simplicity.

‘Brut Nature 2006 is both a wonderful adventure and a complete creation: both of the product and its production processes.’

Philippe Starck