

NEW YORK WINE SOCIETY

Wine, Through Time

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Champagne and the work of making a style repeatable

Comite Champagne identifies roughly 1670-1720 as a period when sparkling production became a deliberate choice in the region. Its historical account emphasizes the development of bottles, closures, and production techniques. The useful story is a sequence of practical problems rather than a single moment when one person supposedly invented the entire modern wine.¹⁸

The distinction between an occasional effect and a repeatable product is important. A result can be interesting before it is reliable. To become something that can be offered consistently, it needs processes that manage variation. This is as much a history of measurement and materials as of inspiration.

The regional fact sheet provides several later landmarks: riddling tables in 1816, Jean-Baptiste Francois's sugar measurement work in 1837, and the development of a metal cap and wire closure in 1844. These address different tasks. Moving sediment, managing fermentation potential, and keeping a closure secure are not interchangeable contributions.¹⁹

That is why a heroic origin story is inadequate even when it contains a real person. A finished bottle joins together the work of growers, cellar teams, glassmakers, and many others. Remembering one name may be convenient. Following the sequence of problems gives you a better understanding of what the bottle actually is.

A process, not a legend

Draw a chain with three labels: desired result, obstacle, practical response. Use a familiar non-wine example first, such as keeping bread fresh or transporting a fragile object. Then apply the structure to a historical wine development you have read about. State only the technical details supported by the source; leave gaps visible.

This exercise helps distinguish "associated with" from "invented." It also encourages you to ask what changed after an innovation: could a product travel farther, be made more reliably, or reach different buyers? Those consequences deserve evidence of their own.

18. Comite Champagne, Champagne and its history.

19. Comite Champagne, Champagne: From Still to Sparkling Wine.

Experiment, disruption, and new audiences

Date	Event	What the date identifies
1816	Champagne riddling tables	A step in sediment management. ¹⁹
1831	Busby's collecting journey	Movement of plant material and knowledge. ³³
1834-1838	Cape emancipation followed by compulsory apprenticeship	Distinct stages in ending slavery. ²⁵
1853	Pouget's Mendoza project	Introduction and adaptation of varieties. ³¹
1855	Bordeaux classification	A commercial hierarchy made formal. ²⁷
1857-1862	Pasteur's foundational fermentation work	Experimental investigation of a familiar process. ²⁸
1920	US national Prohibition takes effect	A legal disruption to alcohol commerce. ³⁶
1933	US constitutional repeal	A legal turning point, not completed recovery. ³⁸
1962	Frank's Finger Lakes winery founded	A regional vinifera milestone. ³⁹
1973	Montana's Marlborough planting initiative	Expansion at a new commercial scale. ⁴²
1976	Paris tasting and New York Farm Winery Act	Distinct changes in recognition and market access. ^{43, 40}
1998	Cornell's wine and grape archive established	Deliberate preservation of industry records. ⁴¹
1999	AWRI closure trial bottled	A controlled packaging comparison. ⁴⁷
2009	VitAdapt vineyard planted	A long-term adaptation experiment. ⁵¹
2019	Beaune harvest study published	A new analysis of a much older archive. ⁴⁹