



QUEL CHAMPAGNE ETE VOUS?

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Christine Manfield's reputation as an international chef of the highest order, is legendary. She has spoiled Australia and wooed Great Britain with her cuisine. When Jayne Powell of Wine Works International suggested that Christine Manfield would be her guest chef at her Champagne Masterclass, one can understand why the dining tables at the demonstration kitchen/dining room at Simon Johnson's Pymont (Sydney) store were booked out.

My knowledge of vintage Champagne was limited, I admit. But I embarked on a journey that would not only inform, but also totally excite and fascinate me. To have one's favourite chef cook for a small group, matching Champagnes with food, is a rare treat.

Founder and Director, Jayne Powell (affectionately known as Champagne Jayne) launched her masterclasses in response to the increasing demand for high-quality, non-vocational wine education. This knowledgeable and eloquently-spoken woman delivers a most informative address between courses, gating up and down between the tables, imparting her wisdom with flair, finesse and humour.

She delivers her knowledge with confident detail of history and intimate product details. Did you know that the first mention of Champagne was in 496AD? Climate, soil, the grapes, the bottle, the region and its history - her passion for the subject rivetted her guests to their seats.



Choosing a Champagne is a matter of personal choice, trying different labels. We were guided through the process of appreciation by learning about appearance, nose and palate, and were encouraged to come to our own conclusions. Wine Works International's unique unbiased Champagne Masterclass allows one to taste different styles of Champagne side by side, and match these wines with food throughout a special meal prepared by a master chef. This time it was a favoured Australian daughter - internationally-applauded chef Christine Manfield.

Each course was carefully considered by Jayne and Christine. Their selection of Champagnes was designed so Manfield could match the underlying nuances of the vintage with the food she had chosen to serve. Seven courses, each perfectly accompanied by the bubbles that were served, was a gastronomic journey of texture and flavour.

We have all bought bubbles for that special occasion for partner, family member or friend. Too often we are guilty of buying expensive Champagne from the bottleshop. This is usually purchased by the 'guilty or lazy' who haven't had the time or inclination to go and buy a present and have called into the bottleshop on the way to the occasion. The more expensive, the better the wine? Not necessarily so. To taste is to know.

My favourite Champagne for the evening was from the prestige cuvees range - the 1996 Nicolas Feuillatte Palms d'Or. Christine Manfield teamed this delicious drop with a green chicken tea. This bottle is priced around \$200. All I have to do now is decide on an occasion to purchase the 1996 Nicolas Feuillatte Palms d'Or and impart my new-found knowledge on its unsuspecting recipient.

Champagne is a symbol of sophistication, status, and exquisite taste. Few icons can rival a bubbling glass of expensive Champagne. The popping of a Champagne cork has become synonymous with celebration, seduction, charm and good company. Flanked on one side by the delightful Lisa McGuigan, General Manager of Tempus Two Wines and on the other by the charming Nicholas Ball from Pionair Adventure Travel, Monsieur Jean Louis Latour, the Mission Économique de l'Ambassade de France, offered his expertise from another table - the company could not have been better.

Jayne Powell is a remarkable ambassador for Champagne. If the opportunity arises to join one of her masterclasses, also on wine or beer for that matter, don't hesitate. www.wineworksinternational.com

