

Press for Champagne

WHAT IF DELIVERING BLISS TO SOMEONE were as simple as connecting a button to a wire? I imagine that's the question the proprietor of Bob Bob Ricard, an eclectic yet elegant London diner, must have asked when configuring the restaurant. Because, while the restaurant features many unusual and amusing design elements and menu items, nobody on the other side of the world ever would have heard of the place if it weren't for a single stroke of genius. Bob Bob Ricard installed buttons at each booth marked "Press for Champagne." Press the button from your booth, and a waiter appears to hand you a glass of Champagne. Just think for a moment about sliding into one of those booths and noticing the button. How tempted are you to press it? Do you smile just thinking about it? Yeah. I do too.

This is the magic of Champagne. You only have to speak of it to make somebody happy. Plenty of wines are wonderful and delicious, but no wine delivers more immediate joy, laughter, surprise, and conviviality among wine drinkers than Champagne. There is a sense in which Champagne seems like it belongs not in the category of wine but in a special bucket of life's pleasures that predictably cause us to rejoice. And it delivers on its promise virtually every time. This is why we love Champagne.

Like anything magical, though, Champagne is mysteriously enchanting in a way that feels supernatural, inexplicable. What's going on in

the glass of Champagne in your hand that makes it taste different from another Champagne? Why do you like one Champagne more than another, and, perhaps more importantly, how can you identify other Champagnes that are similar to the ones you enjoy the most? Are there other types and styles of Champagne that you haven't tried but would love if you did? And how would you even go about finding the answers to these questions? These are the questions asked by the curious Champagne drinker, the person who enjoys Champagne but who correctly intuitively feels that there is so much more joy to be unlocked.

As someone who has spent years obsessively studying and drinking Champagne, I can assure you that Champagne is even better—way better—than you think it is. Not only that, but the personal journey of exploring Champagne, of discovering your own preferences and creating your own model of Champagne, is itself thrilling and satisfying. That's the great news. The problem is that there is no guide for your expedition. You could explore Champagne the way I did: by poring over numerous dense reference books, taking long instructional courses, stumbling through Champagnes you don't understand for reasons you don't understand, compiling hundreds of tasting notes and trying to find threads and distinctions here and there. At the same time, if you take that path, you'll need to do even more research to figure out what parts of Champagne marketing and promotion are true and helpful and what other parts are false, misleading, and misguided. Sounds fun, right?

Hell no. I wrote this book because there is another way, an easier way, and I want to share it with you. You can know and enjoy Champagne as much as I do. To accomplish this, you don't need to be a wine expert, or memorize every bit of minutiae about Champagne, or have a specially trained palate, or consume hundreds of bottles of wine. Nor do you need a hyper-specific instructional manual, as if you were assembling an Ikea bedroom set.

What you need is a guide. A guide does not tell you exactly what to think, what to like, or what to do. A guide points out the noteworthy and, by doing so, helps you find your own path. That is what this book is. I'm going to show you how to organize your journey through Champagne, what to look for, and how to understand what you encounter. You just need to bring your curiosity, your willingness to explore mindfully, and your love of Champagne. If you do that, at the end of it, you will have opened the doors to the amazements in Champagne and will have become a better, more satisfied, more joyful Champagne drinker. And who in their right mind wouldn't want that?

We're going on an adventure through Champagne. And we're doing it with purpose. So grab a glass and an ice bucket, and get ready to drink and enjoy.