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# SETTING THE bar high

**Champagne Drappier is the sometimes overlooked Côte des Bar's leading light – and has long been a true champion of Pinot Noir**

**TUCKED AWAY** down in the Côte des Bar, the southern satellite of the Champagne region, lies Champagne Drappier. Innovation is an accolade frequently bandied about in the world of wine but, in the case of Drappier, it's hard to find a better fit for a Champagne house.

Certified carbon neutral since 2016, it won the 2017 Green Award from *the drinks business* and was awarded a prize for innovation by *La RVF* wine magazine in 2019. The Drappier family was instrumental in the replanting of the Pinot Noir grape in the region, and it would be impossible to account for the recent rise in popularity and critical acclaim of the long-overlooked Côte des Bar Champagnes without its mention.

For almost a century, the Côte des Bar played second (or third, or fourth) fiddle to the Vallée de la Marne, the Côte des Blancs and the Montagne de Reims in the north. It officially became part of the

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Champagne appellation in 1927, but never enjoyed the same level of admiration as its cousins.

The Côte des Bar's differing soils and climate means it may have more in common with Kimmeridgian Chablis than chalky Épernay, though perhaps the mindset is more Burgundian too, more terroir-driven. But that is where the similarities with Chablis end, with 84% of the Côte des Bar now planted with Pinot Noir. As the most southern part of Champagne, and the sunniest, the dominance of Pinot Noir makes sense.

Drappier's best-known cuvées are Pinot Noir-dominant, including Carte d'Or. With a reputation so tied to the pernickety grape, the late, great André Drappier was known as Père Pinot in the region.

Tucked away in the village of Urville, and just as hard to find at auction, Drappier, and notably its flagship cuvée Grande Sendrée, is on iDealwine's watchlist. A list compiled once a year in its *Barometer* publication, iDealwine highlights the producers to watch in all major wine regions, using data from 260,000 hammer prices.

According to the top online wine auctioneer, Grande Sendrée is a 'vineux' or vinous Champagne, full of character – a Champagne for wine lovers. It takes its name from a single-parcel vineyard that was in cinders (cendres) following a fire that devastated Urville in 1838. A spelling mistake in the land register resulted in Sendrée being written with an 's' and not a 'c' – and it stuck.

This Champagne has significant ageing potential. It is made from Pinot Noir (55%) and Chardonnay (45%), matured for a minimum of seven years sur lattes, with a low dosage (less than 5g/l). The tasting notes of *db* editor-in-chief Patrick Schmitt MW describe the 2015 vintage as "persistent, aged, but fresh, and made in a manner that leans towards an oxidative style. A Champagne for many occasions".

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With an enviably long drinking window, Grande Sendrée in the very fine 2008 vintage is among the most sought-after at auction, consistently fetching a hammer price just over €100, a 75% increase in seven years. The 2009 vintage appears very rarely at auction, with only three bottles going under the hammer in the past five years.

Prices for the 2010 vintage are rising steadily. It was rated the best Grande Sendrée vintage by *Le Figaro Vin*, at 97 out of 100. This vintage's prices are creeping up, now selling for an average of €77, up 9% in just one year, and it has recently sold for 20% over its estimate.

The most recent vintage, 2015, is yet to go under the hammer, and 2012 is also rare, which is to be expected considering the long ageing process.

Most successful bids originate from France, but bottles have been won by bidders in Singapore, Italy and the US too.

When it comes to rising Champagne producers on iDealwine's watchlist, enthusiasts continue to snap up bottles at accessible prices. In 2024, following years of post-pandemic record-breaking figures, global Champagne sales fell by 9.2%. In fine wine auctions, prices also slumped, and the average hammer price of a bottle of Champagne on iDealwine.com was €173, down 16% on 2023.

When ranking the highest hammer prices fetched for all Champagne in 2024, they are much more restrained than in previous years, so even very rare wines – 2008 S from Salon or Vieilles Vignes Françaises from Bollinger in the same vintage – did not provoke the same bidding wars that marked the post-Covid years.

Even though prices fell, the online auction leader saw demand climb, with the volume of Champagne sold at auction up by 38%. Initial findings from 2025 auction data indicate that prices are rising again, and the average now sits at €197. Accessible prices in a fluctuating market, including those from Drappier, will continue to attract Champagne enthusiasts to auction.

Instrumental in putting the Côte des Bar on the map for Champagne lovers, Drappier has inspired a generation of ambitious Champagne makers in the region and the growing reputation of single-parcel Champagnes. On iDealwine's watchlist are some rapidly rising stars, including Fleury, Jérôme Coessens, Olivier Horiot, Val Frison, Vouette & Sorbée and, of course, auction icon Cédric Bouchard. Watch this space.

### About iDealwine.com

- Founded in 2000, iDealwine is France's top wine auctioneer and leading online wine auction house worldwide.
- Fine Spirits Auction (FSA) is iDealwine's dedicated spirits platform, launched in partnership with La Maison du Whisky, a French specialist in high-end spirits since 1956.
- Based in Paris, with offices in Bordeaux and Beaune, and internationally in Hong Kong, Singapore and New York, iDealwine sources rare bottles from European cellars, private collections and direct from producers before meticulously authenticating and shipping to enthusiasts, collectors and trade customers worldwide.
- If you are keen to sell your wines or spirits, check out idealwine.com.

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