

Forbes

The Best New Champagne For Your Valentine's Day Dinner

It's exactly one month to Valentine's Day, and nothing says "romance" quite like great champagne - and no champagne house in France is quite like [Bollinger](#). This icon has been making some of the world's finest sparkling wines for nearly two centuries, since 1829. I have visited the champagne region twice, and done extensive tastings at Bollinger (and many others) and it remains one of my all-time favorite wineries.

Bollinger is the largest house that is still family owned, with a rich history and amazing track record of excellence. It was the first champagne ever to receive a Royal Seal of Approval (1884 by Queen Victoria) and remains a favorite of royalty. It was the wine chosen for the fairy tale wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Even fictional stars love it - for almost 50 years, Bollinger has famously been the favorite of James Bond, 007. Since Roger Moore ordered it onscreen in *Live and Let Die*, Bollinger has appeared in 14 Bond films with four different stars, including Pierce Brosnan, Timothy Dalton and current Bond, Daniel Craig. Whenever *No Time to Die*, the newest 007 vehicle, repeatedly delayed by the coronavirus pandemic, finally comes out, the famous champagne will be back on the big screen (or at least streaming).

But that has nothing to do with Valentine's Day. What does have something to do with the occasion is PN VZ15, Bollinger's newest addition to its permanent range and the first since the launch of rosé 14 years ago. This is big news, as it is both a very high-end champagne and a great value, a relative bargain in the industry, and it is getting rave reviews.

“A fabulous Champagne. I tasted it recently and was super impressed...The new PN VZ 15 is superb. Don’t miss it,” wrote acclaimed wine critic and former *Wine Advocate* staffer Antonio Galloni in *Vinous*, which gave it a whopping 94 points. *Decanter* magazine also gave it a 94, while it earned 93 from *Wine & Spirits*.



The name doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue, but the PN stands for Pinot Noir, long the house signature backbone of the Bollinger style, and while other grapes are allowed in champagne, this one is a rare 100% pure expression of pinot. There are many subsets of champagne, the best known being simply non-vintage and vintage, but a niche is the “blanc de noir” style, or “white from red,” meaning made entirely from red skinned grapes and omitting chardonnay, widely used in making champagne. Some blanc de noir contains pinot meunier, but the best-known examples are 100% pinot noir, like the new PN label. Future releases of the wine will highlight the same varietal from a different cru. This first take on it focuses on Pinot Noir from Verzenay 2015 (hence PN VZ15), and also includes reserve wines dating back to 2009 for added richness.

The concept was to create a little sibling to Bollinger's ultra-famous and coveted Vieilles Vignes Françaises, the world's most acclaimed blanc de noir and arguably the most collectible champagne, period. If you could find a recent vintage bottle of VVF, it would run you over a thousand dollars at retail, more than ten times as much as the new and impressive PN VZ15, which has an MSRP of \$120 but is available for under a hundred. It opens with rich aromas of cherry jam-infused fruit and dried fig followed by flavors of peach, apricot and hazelnut on the palate.

While blanc de noir is white, not rose, the exclusive use of pinot noir gives it a more rose-like character, which is to say it goes better with food, which has generally been an attribute all Bollinger wines are known for, though in this case, it is even more flexible and can go with everything from risotto to salads to lighter red meats. This Valentine's Day, don't settle for a pre-dinner flute, enjoy the whole bottle with your special meal. But like most top shelf champagnes it also ages extremely well, so you just sit on it until next year or the year after. Or enjoy it now and later. Whenever you drink it, if you love champagne, you will not be disappointed.