



ON THE CHAMPAGNE TRAIL

How husband and wife team Serge and *Malin Ngoie* founded @thechampagneguru

Words **MALIN NGOIE**



Champagne brings people together. Top champagne expert Richard Juhlin says it is the "chameleon of all wines" because it tastes different in different surroundings and has so many layers. Champagne is an art form, the champagne houses and their chef de caves are true artists who spend an immense amount of time perfecting their craft.

Our story began five years ago when we lived in Italy for a year. Serge had a work assignment in Milan and we would travel back and forth from London, driving through the Champagne region. We fell

in love with the area and stumbled upon a 300-year old house in a little village in Haute-Marne. We ended up buying it, with a plan to open it up for unique, tailor-made champagne experiences. The dream of working together with what we both really love started to take shape. Serge's passion for champagne is legendary and was a good complement to my media, photography and styling background to initiate The Champagne Guru project. After attending several trade and public champagne events, we realised that there was a gap in the market. We started to look for opportunities where we could add value, bring consumers and producers together in a more exclusive, intimate and relaxed

environment to enhance personal and long-term relationships. Our idea is to work closely with different champagne houses, support them with marketing strategies and create unique and spectacular events in unexpected venues and surroundings.

For our launch event we set the stage on the Thames in an Art Deco boat moored by the London Eye Pier. We teamed up with Richard Juhlin, the World's leading champagne expert, to talk about his recent book *Champagne Hiking*. We wanted to have fun with the event, to take champagne out of the cellar, add class, expertise and glamour. On 1 December the red carpet was rolled out. No expense was spared as guests and champagne houses were treated to an unforgettable and magical Gatsby-styled evening with a six-course gala dinner paired with champagnes.

The evening started with a welcome drink by Champagne Frèrejean Frères – quoted by Richard Juhlin as one of the best Blanc de Blancs on the market. Imperial caviar canapés were paired with the relatively new house Paul Launois Cuvée Monochrome. This was followed by a charcuterie platter with foie gras and Parma ham paired with Champagne Billecart-Salmon Rosé NV served from Jeroboams. Seabass carpaccio was excellently paired with Champagne Bonnaire Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru 09, followed by a steak tartar served with the amazing Champagne Bollinger RD 2004. Pan-seared cod, creamed ratte potato and champagne beurre blanc, paired with Charles Heidsieck Champagne Cuvée Blanc des Millénaires 2004, was served as the main course. For the grand finale, outstanding De Venoge Louis XV 1996 was paired with aged Comté, Parmesan and Mimolette cheese.

For the future we would like to engage more champagne houses, to explore marketing avenues and opportunities by tapping into our knowledge of the UK and European markets. The ultimate goal is to expand our business of connecting more people with and through champagnes. 

THE CHAMPAGNE GURU

For more info or to enquire about organising a bespoke champagne event, please contact us on thechampagneguru@gmail.com or +44(0)7956124806