



Champagne: Bollinger's 2018 La Grande Année and the Current State of the 1996, 1995 and 1953



By KRISTAPS KARKLINS © Mar 19, 2026



Bollinger stands out as one of the most able large houses, continuing to deliver some of the greatest experiences with mature Champagne to those fortunate enough to have such bottles in their cellars—even if a certain degree of bottle variation, linked to storage conditions and the resilience of the cork, is naturally to be expected. Hence, this report, in addition to notes on the most recent releases, also explores a number of mature (and maturing) vintages, among them the 1996, 1995 and the star of this small publication—a magnum of the 1953 Vintage, bearing the historic label “Renaudin-Bollinger & Cie” alongside the designation “Extra Quality Very Dry.”

The recently released 2018s confirm that Bollinger remains a dependable source largely irrespective of vintage. While many wines from this sunny and abundant year exhibit comparatively soft, moderately concentrated profiles, Bollinger’s La Grande Année and La Grande Année Rosé—produced from balanced yields in the context of Champagne’s broader averages—are not among them, even if they present themselves, unsurprisingly, with a broader and more succulent profile than the racy, fine-boned renditions delivered by

the 2014 and 2008 vintages. As for the tasting itself, these first impressions are developed in greater detail in the accompanying notes.



The latest releases from Bollinger: the 2018 La Grande Année and 2018 La Grande Année Rosé, alongside the 2016 B16—the latter produced in a vintage when La Grande Année was not declared, as the harvest did not yield sufficient fruit from Aÿ to serve as the cuvée’s principal component

As readers will recall, Bollinger owns 180 hectares of vines, accounting for roughly 40% of the grapes used in its production. Of these, 110 hectares are managed directly by the house and have been certified organic since late 2025. It bears repeating that Bollinger fully eliminated the use of herbicides in 2016, an initiative that began in 2009 with the desire to rehabilitate its emblematic vineyards, Vieilles Vignes Françaises and La Côte aux Enfants, and which gradually expanded to encompass all of their holdings.

In anticipation of its bicentennial in 2029, the estate is currently undergoing significant upgrades and has just completed a building dedicated to housing what is now one of the largest barrel stocks in Champagne, distributed across three units, each arranged over three levels. Their already extensive collection of oak vessels is now set to expand to some 5,000 barrels, which, as readers will know by now, are used to ferment Pinot Noir and Chardonnay sourced exclusively from vineyards designated as premier and grand cru.

In the winery, to mitigate the oxidative tendencies of Pinot Noir—a variety that is always an important component at this address—oxygen exposure is managed with increasing precision, through measures such as fewer rackings, limiting filtration to a single instance and employing jetting at disgorgement—all while avoiding an excessive reliance on sulfur dioxide.