

# CLUB ENOLOGIQUE



## Syrah and beyond

How the Rhône's winning blend  
finally conquered the world



# Krug 1976–2008

**A tasting of every vintage of the past four decades captivated Essi Avellan MW – but the NV wines almost stole the show**

Ever since its foundation in 1843, Krug has concerned itself only with producing limited volumes of top-quality Champagnes. Its monumentally rich style of wine, born in oak barrels, has endured the test of time, and even today, the house's consistency remains second to none, while its wines are invariably among Champagne's longest-lived.

An indulgent vertical tasting put on by the Gomseglet Connoisseurs club gave us the opportunity to put Krug's larger-than-life reputation to the test. We gathered on a December morning at Vinkällaren Grappe in Stockholm, where Marina Olsson, a passionate Swedish Champagne collector, regularly treats her club mates to carefully constructed verticals of some of Champagne's grandest cuvées. This time, we had the privilege to savour 17 vintages of Krug – from the recently released 2008, all the way back to the 1976.

We readied our palates for the task by essaying Krug Rosé as an aperitif, followed by six editions of Krug Grande Cuvée. An apt introduction, since it was founder Joseph Krug who, on the first page of his famous notebook, declared that the house was to produce just two cuvées, of equal quality: Cuvée No.1 and Cuvée No.2. The blended multivintage Cuvée No.1 – today's Grande Cuvée – was to offer 'everything every year', as opposed to the vintage-specific Cuvée No.2. No matter how you look at it, of course, today's higher pricing inevitably signals superior quality for Cuvée No.2, the vintage. However, as committed Krug lovers well know, Grande Cuvée can reach similar heights, and the Krug ID concept and edition numbering have given the collector the tools to properly appreciate Grande Cuvée's complexities. Looking at the performance of the 159th Édition (base 2003) against vintage 2003, and the 164th (base 2008) against the 2008, I was pleased

to see how my assessments support the original idea of equal quality between the cuvées, giving me ever more reason to collect Grande Cuvées over the vintage rendering.

The vertical tasting itself provided the opportunity to appreciate Krug's many faces at different stages. It had taken Olsson several years to assemble the selection, with impeccable provenance being a key criterion. All the wines were Krug's original disgorgements, and all the younger wines were in pristine condition, with only a couple of the mature vintages showing signs of poor storage. One bottle – sadly the tasting's oldest, the 1976 vintage – was corked.

All Krugs benefit from ageing. Five years after release, they tend to have opened up beautifully, showing more expression and a beautifully harmonious nature. Grand Cuvées are a real delight some 10 to 15 years after release, often at the peak of their expression. The vintages are all long-lived; thereafter it depends on the vintage (and the individual bottle, of course) as to how they age. When well kept, all should age for at least 15 years post-release, and the best for several decades.

We started with a blind taste of the five most recent vintages, which established such consistency that they were a challenge to identify correctly. In the next flight of four vintages, the 1996 stood out for its magnitude. The classic trilogy of 1988, 1989 and 1990 provided textbook examples of their respective vintage characters, with, unsurprisingly, the 1988 showing by far the most youthful. Of the early 1980s, sadly only the 1981 was in pristine condition, but what a beauty it was, providing the tasting's best surprise. The final stamp of proof of Krug's quality and age-worthiness came with the immaculate 1979, which left me wanting for nothing more.



# 96

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
168ème Édition (Krug  
ID 219012, base 2012)**

*Drink 2022–40*

A super-refined, complex nose, with cool, restrained fruitiness. A touch oaky at first but not a hint of oxidation. A flirtatious melange of floral, smoky and yeasty tones over pristine, crystalline fruitiness. Ripe stone fruits, candied lemon, baked apple and ginger.

Crisp, invigorating palate that feels driven and light (for Krug). A complex, hugely successful blend of 198 different wines from 11 years going back all the way to 1996. Fine tension and energy to the harmonious and age-worthy whole. 12.5%

£250 The Finest Bubble, £1,400.58 (case of 6) Bordeaux Index

# 95

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
164ème Édition (Krug  
ID 216016, base 2008)**

*Drink 2022–40*

A seductively charred, toast-and sweet brioche-scented nose, with layers of vanilla and baking spices. Lots of appley and peachy fruit, with luscious honey tones. An impressively intense but elegantly detailed, seemingly light palate that comes with both energy and tension. No wonder it feels fresh – 68% of the blend comes from the zingy 2008 vintage – but there is also plenty of reserve wine complexity through wines going back to 1990. A hugely impressive wine already, but you can feel there is so much more to come. 12%

£360 The Finest Bubble, £2,190.18 (case of 6, broking) Bordeaux Index

# 96

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
159ème Édition (Krug  
ID 313052, base 2003)**

*Drink 2022–32*

Gorgeously toasty, rich and seductive nose of bonfire, exotic spices, tropical fruit and dried apricots. Fruit-packed and impressively complex, this wine is going from strength to strength. Viscous mouthfeel, with impressive concentration but enough freshness to escape heaviness. The hot 2003 vintage made up 63% of the blend, with 1996 reserve wine Chardonnays from Trépail and Avize and 1994 from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger generating plenty of freshness to the impressive whole. Blooming already but should develop gracefully given further time. 12%

£386 The Finest Bubble

# 95

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
(released between 1994  
and 2004)**

*Drink 2022–27*

Bright golden colour, with peachy tones. Gorgeously toasty, promisingly layered nose, which oozes the essential richness of Krug; bold fruitiness, with sweet peachy tones, dates, apple marmalade and burned wood. The palate does not quite match the magnitude of the nose, its pleasant and mellow fruitiness showing signs of weakening. Nevertheless, this hugely enjoyable, fully mature wine shows the full wealth of its complexities. A testament to the ageing potential of Grande Cuvée. 12.5%

N/A UK



# 90

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
(released between 1982  
until 1994)**

*Drink 2022–24*

Deep browning, slightly hazy colour. Sweet, evolved, mature wine nose, with toast, tar, golden raisins and dried apricots. Sweet, age-mellowed palate, viscous and velvety. This one comes with almost a dessert wine feeling to it. Very delicate bubbling left. Truly on the tertiary side – mature but hanging in there. 12.5%

N/A UK

# 83

**Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
(released between 1979  
and 1981)**

*Drink now*

Deep, orange-hued old wine colour. There is a strong mushroomy touch to the evolved nose, with iron, forest floor and tar notes. Some appley fruit persists alongside smoky, spicy and rubbery aromas. Still, the aromatics are largely unpleasant. There is a healthy mousse left on the diluted and watery palate, which finishes on a fresh, salty note. This is past its peak now. 12.5%

N/A UK

# 93

**Krug Vintage 2008  
(Krug ID 419044)**

*Drink 2025–42*

Despite having been disgorged for a full two years, the slowly ageing 2008 is still waiting to come around. Its strongly Pinot Noir (53%) nose comes with bitter almonds, yellow apple, dried flowers, honey and biscuits – not the aromas you would expect from the cool year. The palate is viscous yet tightly knit and stylishly refreshed by the wine's accentuated, steely acidity. It comes with the structure for ageing, but the whole is still closed, deserving further time. 12%

£538.76 Cru World Wine

# 95

**Krug Vintage 2006  
(Krug ID 118018)**

*Drink 2022–40*

Deep lemon-gold colour. There is more expression to the nose than in any of the other wines of the flight. A touch of oak, salted liquorice, toffee, roasted nuts, vanilla and toasty whiffs. While the nose is wide open, the palate is firm and structured, still holding back a lot. After the initial generous burst of fruit on the nose, the palate surprises with its crisp acidity and even a feel of salty minerality. Expressive already, but the structure promises longevity. 12%

£261.76 Bordeaux Index

# 95

**Krug Vintage 2004  
(Krug ID 316034)**

*Drink 2022–40*

Bright lemon-gold colour. Highly elegant nose, with the classy oaky tone being beautifully integrated to the refined fruitiness. Reserved and fresh, with appley fruit spiced with cinnamon, cardamom, salt, lemon peel and hay notes. On the palate, the seamless feel of understated elegance and coolness continues. Tight, fresh and zingy taste, with a lighter feel than usual for a Krug Vintage. A slowly and gracefully ageing beauty on its way up. 12%

£248.43 Alex Marton Fine Wines, £1,600 (case of 6 in bond) Bordeaux Index

# 96

**Krug Vintage 2003  
(Krug ID 313044)**

*Drink 2022–30*

Gorgeously sweet toast-lined nose, with vanilla, red berries, dried apricots, pencil shavings, ripe peaches, baked apple and curry spiciness. Complex yet bright Pinot fruitiness, with real radiance to it. Instantly impressive but not at the expense of finesse. There is an attractive warming sensation on the finish of this highly concentrated Vintage that has a softer feel of acidity. One of the grandest 2003s in full bloom. 12%

£256.26 Bordeaux Index

# 97

**Krug Vintage 2002  
(Krug ID 115009)**

*Drink 2022–35*

Lusciously ripe, fruity nose, with an exotic feel to it: burned sugar, baking spices, aniseed and tropical fruit. The charred oaky tones are well integrated into the whole. The fleshy, almost chewy mouthfeel gives an impression of ample sunshine in the glass. Yet the immense richness and concentration are tamed by its fine acidic line. Impressive already, revealing a multitude of layers, but still with future potential. 12%

£320.96 iDealwine, £2,480 (case of 6 in bond) Bordeaux Index

# 94

**Krug Vintage 2000  
(Krug ID 311029)**

*Drink 2022–32*

Compared to my other encounters with this wine, this bottle was somewhat disappointing. The fruit was muted, with oxidation creeping in, masking some of its usually bright fruit. There was spicy pepperiness on the attack, with apple compote, wet straw and lead-pencil aromas. Well built and structured on a palate that felt a little woody. Still worth 94 points in the blind tasting, but I have gone as high as 97 previously. 12%

£303.43 L'Assemblage; £942 (magnum) Hedonism Wines, £1,800 (case of 6 in bond) Bordeaux Index



# 94

**Krug Vintage 1998**

*Drink 2022–28*

Deep lemon-gold colour. An expressive and inviting nose – on the autumnal side, with red apple, yellow plum, dried figs, charred wood, burned sugar, ginger and forest floor. A rich palate but with accentuated, steely acidity. Vinous and driven, but it finishes a little short, giving an impression of full maturity. Plenty of evolution here and some oxidative characters, but there is no hurry to enjoy it. 12%

£347.43 Fine+Rare, £2,320 (case of 6 in bond) Bordeaux Index

# 98

**Krug Vintage 1996**

*Drink 2022–35*

Deep peach-toned colour. Stunning nose of sweet, sugar-coated fruit, with beautiful coffee tones, roasted nuts, soft vanilla, dried apricots and ripe figs. Truly glorious and monumentally complex. An unbeatable combination of zingy acidity, a broad palate and massive fruitiness. There is so much fruit to this '96 that it can easily carry its bold acidity. An age-defying wine a long way away from its peak – Krug at its very best. 12%

£553.43 Berry Bros & Rudd, £3,420 (case of 6 in bond) Bordeaux Index



95

Krug Vintage 1995

Drink 2022-30

Bright, deep lemon-gold colour showing some age. A softer nose than on the others in the flight, with distinctly sweet fruitiness. Fallen apple, aromatic wood, soft spiciness and blown wheat – and slightly on the oxidative side, to my surprise. The palate is majestically structured, full-bodied and soothingly velvet-textured, but this bottle gave a more oxidative impression than my other encounters with it. Still 95 points, but better bottles should be out there. 12%

£684 The Finest Bubble

91

Krug Vintage 1990

Drink now

Very deep orange-hued golden colour. An old-wine nose, completely tertiary with dusty tar and dried-fruit aromas taking the lead. The character is evolved and aromatically on the oxidative side, suggesting an even older vintage. On the palate, it is big and bold with lots of volume, but there is also welcome freshness. Some of the unpleasant rubbery aromas blew off over time in the glass, but there was no helping this bottle being past its peak. 12%

£666.25 Wine Owners



91

Krug Vintage 1989

Drink 2022-27

Deep orange-toned colour. Oxidative nose, with apricot, caramel and orange marmalade fruit, but also dusty potato-peel whiffs, suggesting storage issues. Full, rich and powerful on the palate; fine freshness. A structured wine from a warm year showing a lot of age already. This Vintage was originally released before the 1988 and has proven to be the shorter-lived. Better bottles than this should exist. 12%

£840 Hatton & Edwards

95

Krug Vintage 1988

Drink now

Pale lemon-gold colour. A nose full of sophisticated, cool, crisp fruitiness. A complex melange of juniper, green apple, white flowers, toast, wax and baking spices. The crunchy, crystalline fruitiness continues to express itself on the linear, high-acid palate, reflecting the cool year's slowly developing virtues. Fully mature by now, but the freshness and pure fruitiness show no signs of withering. A somewhat lighter and more delicate Krug Vintage, with plenty of elegance and vivacity. 12%

£478.66 iDealwine

90

Krug Vintage 1985

Drink now

Evolved orange-toned colour. Evolution is evident also on the nose, which has charred, smoky, waxy and nutty tones. Despite being the youngest in its flight, this is the least fruity, showing a completely tertiary character. On the palate, it is also getting old, with weakening fruit despite its highly concentrated body. This bottle has not taken time too well, and better ones should exist. 12%

£900 Hatton & Edwards

94

Krug Vintage 1982

Drink 2022-27

Deep orange-toned colour. There is still lovely fruitiness on the nose, a ripe sweet style, with orange marmalade, freshly ground coffee, white Port and dried fruits. Full and rich on the concentrated palate, with perfectly integrated acidity bringing about a sensation of completeness. The overall impression remains attractively fruity, perky and disarmingly harmonious. Past its finest peak, but this is joyous in its mellow expressiveness. 12%

From £1,365 (magnum) Clos19, Harrods, Warwick Banks & Jenkins

97

Krug Vintage 1981

Drink now

The tasting's biggest surprise. Bright, deep orange-toned colour. Supple, deeply fruity nose, with fragrant pastry notes, roasted almonds, orange blossom and apricot jam. The nose opens up gloriously over time. Full and round, soothingly mellow palate, with wonderfully perky acidity bringing freshness and vibrancy to the concentrated whole. Highly classy, calm and complex wine from the seldom-declared, tiny yet excellent-quality vintage. A perfect bottle at its very peak. 12%

£500 L'Assemblage; £3,340 (magnum) Hedonism Wines

99

Krug Vintage 1979

Drink now

Clear, shiny golden colour of great depth. Stunningly complex, sweetly fruity nose revealing a healthy, mature wine in a perfectly kept bottle. Honeycomb, orange blossom, apricot marmalade, brioche and coffee layers all intermingle in a playful way. So luscious, intense and feisty on the seamlessly textured palate of cashmere-like softness. It combines its bright fruitiness to remarkable vibrancy and depth in soothing harmony. Bottled perfection with age-defying qualities. 12%

From £954 Hedonism Wines, Wilkinson Vintners

N/A

Krug Vintage 1976

A touch of mushroom on the nose reveals minor cork taint. Otherwise, the bottle seems pristine and fresh. Judgment reserved. 12%

£695 L'Assemblage

