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A FASHION & BEAUTY MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

DECEMBER 2011

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SO LUXE

BY MERILEE KERN



BUBBLING OVER WITH DELIGHT

Celebrating the joys of a life well lived and success well deserved always calls for a toast of champagne. As an aspiring connoisseur, I'm always on the hunt for champagnes that offer a multi-sensory delight even beyond the palate. In this quest I have uncovered Armand de Brignac—a treasure, quite literally.

Armand de Brignac is a high-end, refined cuvée available in three prestigious selections: Brut Gold, Champagne Rosé, and Champagne Blanc de Blancs—each reflecting the discerning tastes of those individuals who desire the finer things in life. These artisanal champagnes, instantly identifiable by the dramatic Ace of Spades insignias on all of its bottles, are produced in Champagne, France by the Cattier family, which has been cultivating vineyards and overseeing the production of fine champagnes since 1763.

So, it's no wonder the result of their effort is extraordinary. This champagne has, in fact, been ranked the number one in the world in a blind tasting of over 1,000 brands.

The family's flagship Armand de Brignac product is the Brut Gold, which embodies the traditional French Champagne-style of complex and full-bodied tastes that comes from a

DRINK

perfectly balanced blend of chardonnay, pinot noir, and pinot meunier wine. This prestige cuvée is utterly divine, intermingling sweet and acidic flavors like apricots and apples with light floral aromas and a creamy mouth feel.

Armand de Brignac's beautiful, salmon-hued rosé is rife with aromas of fresh strawberries and blackcurrant. The bouquet is rich, with red fruits in front and lightly smoky grilled notes behind. The finish seems to linger for days.

The company's Blanc de Blancs is delicate, dry and crisp with notes of floral accents. Aromas of vanilla, citrus fruits and dried apricots abound in this breathtaking expression of Champagne chardonnay fruit.

There are no assembly processes for the production of this inimitable champagne. Only eight passionate vintners craft it by hand, using Old-World production techniques and well-honed wine-making expertise that adheres to a heritage of exceptional quality.

Exceptional indeed.

"Our champagne is produced from grape to glass through traditional hand labor-intensive methods," notes family patriarch Jean-Jacques Cattier. "It is aged in a gated section of the cellars considered one of the deepest in Champagne."

While infinitely palate-pleasing, Armand de Brignac's selections are equitably a feast for the eyes. All three champagnes come in an opulent gold-plated paperless bottle that is breathtaking unto itself. Each bears two Ace of Spades insignias and is fitted with four engraved pewter labels, which are hand-applied to the bottle's surface. This distinctive vessel, originally conceived by the André Courrèges fashion house, is meticulously decorated at a single site in France's Cognac region.

The striking bottles are then housed in a black lacquered wooden case lined with black velvet and embossed with the champagne's royal crest. Each box is fitted with an engraved nameplate, reflecting the splendor and grand style of the French fashion world—all foretelling the remarkable tasting experience within.

In grandiose form, the company recently released the largest bottle of luxury champagne in existence: the stunning "Midas," a massive 30-liter glistening metallic vessel equivalent to 40 regular-sized 750ml bottles and weighing 100 pounds. The first Midas bottle of Armand de Brignac was sold for \$100,000 to an anonymous high roller in Las Vegas.

All of Armand de Brignac's exclusive champagnes, which retail for approximately \$300 to \$500 per 750ml bottle, are simply a must for those with discerning taste buds and an appreciation of the finer things in life. Guilty, party of one.

The Luxe List Executive Editor Merilee Kern scours the luxury marketplace for exemplary travel experiences, extraordinary events, and notable products and services. Submissions are accepted at www.LuxeListReviews.com. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/LuxeListEditor> or www.Facebook.com/TheLuxeList.



A woman in a red winter hat is blowing a cloud of snow. In the foreground, a racing helmet with "GOODYEAR" and "BONDURANT" branding is visible, along with a red Christmas ornament. A card with the text "A Gift for You." is also present.

RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ PHOENIX, ARIZONA

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