

Town & Country WEDDINGS

FALL/WINTER 2008

THIS SEASON'S BEST

Gowns
Registry Ideas
Jewelry
Honeymoon
Escapes

PLUS
Champagne
Primer
Beauty Tips
New Looks
for Diamonds
Gifts for
the Groom

The bride wears
Vera Wang

\$4.95





As soon as photographer **PERRY HAGOPIAN** arrived at Alice Temperley's SoHo showroom ("Alice in Wonderland," page 29), he was struck by how much the backdrop echoed the designer's graceful aesthetic. "The light, elegant space speaks volumes about Alice and her work," he says. "It really enabled me to capture her style." Hagopian has also taken portraits of Zac Posen and Gilles Mendel for *T&C Weddings*; he is a regular contributor to *InStyle*.



New York-based wine expert **CYNTHIA SIN-YI CHENG** had the difficult task of tasting flute upon flute of Champagne in preparation for "Bubble Indemnity" (page 101). "There are so many different varieties today," she says. "I chose a few that I liked best, then thought about themes and food pairings to come up with some fun suggestions." Cheng is the wine editor for *Cravings* (findyourcraving.com) and writes for Portfolio.com.



It may not be a surprise to discover that florist **ARIELLA CHEZAR** (pictured with her son, Aidan Oak) believes flowers can brighten one's surroundings. But for "Great Expectations" (page 110), she tried to accomplish something more profound. "Even if their effect is just temporary, I love how flowers add life, freshness and color," she says. "They lift a whole room." Her arrangements have been featured previously in *T&C Weddings* and in such titles as *Real Simple*.



CARA BIRNBAUM always knew that massages were a nice perk, but she didn't realize how *necessary* they were for a bride-to-be ("Take a Beauty Break," page 70). "The idea that stress and anxiety—two things brides know plenty about—can affect your appearance is fascinating and a bit scary," she says. "But the corollary is that relaxation can make you more attractive." Birnbaum lives in Jersey City with her husband and daughter, June, and writes for *Vogue*, *Allure* and other publications.



While shooting this season's top bridal gowns for "Great Expectations," **PAUL COSTELLO** used the setting, a private home in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, to his full advantage. "It's a beautiful 19th-century town house that is cleverly updated with extremely modern elements," he says. "I think that came across in the photos." (For proof, see the image on page 121.) In addition to *Town & Country*, Costello's work can be seen in *Domino* and *Elle*.



"I was trying to achieve something modern while not losing touch with all that is classic and traditional about wedding dresses," says *T&C* fashion director **KATE DIMMOCK** about her work on "Great Expectations." It was also an opportunity for her to live vicariously. "I eloped," she says, "so styling this shoot was a chance to indulge in the bridal fantasy." Dimmock lives in New York with her husband and two-year-old daughter, Molly.



Bubble Indemnity

SO MANY CHAMPAGNES ON THE MARKET, SO LITTLE TIME TO CHOOSE. TO HELP YOU SELECT THE ONE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR WEDDING, WE ENLISTED WINE CONSULTANT **CYNTHIA SIN-YI CHENG**.

THE RANGE OF CHAMPAGNES AVAILABLE TODAY IS seemingly endless, so you'll easily find a style for any type of wedding. From bone-dry brut zeros and elegant *blanc de blancs* to fruity rosés and vintage prestige cuvées, every choice will send a different message to your guests, and your pick can be the ideal top note of your dream wedding.

In order to make an educated selection, however, it's important to begin by taste-testing each variety. After all, you should like the beverage your father-in-law will be using to toast you when he welcomes you into his family. To truly dazzle partygoers, try Champagne from a grower-producer, a choice that

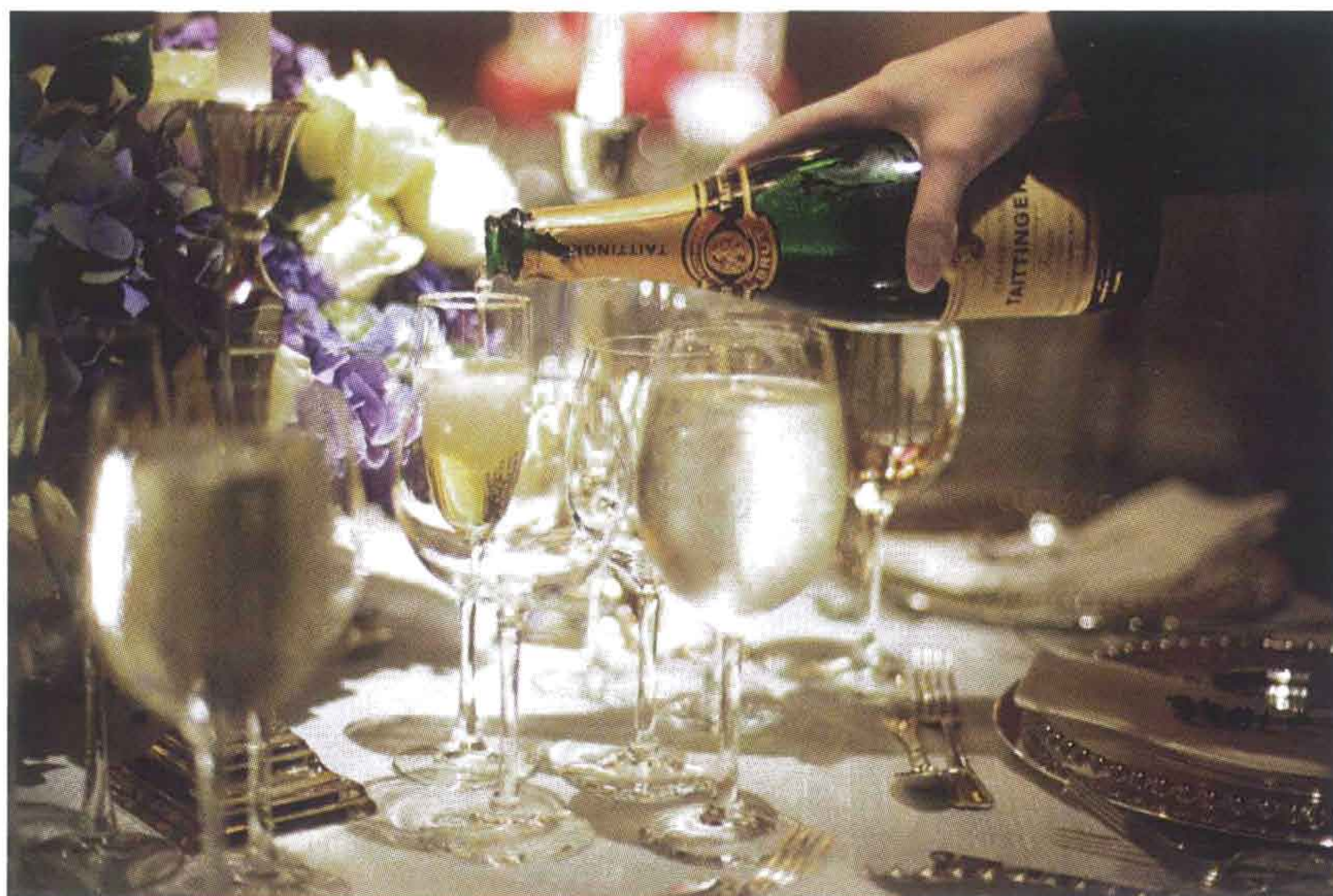
shows you've gone beyond the big vendors for inspiration. Since the most costly ingredient is the fruit itself, these growers, who have eliminated the middleman, can offer boutique wines at a good quality-to-price ratio. And by choosing an artisanal winery, you'll introduce a new name to your guests, adding a little excitement to an age-old wedding tradition.

Should you be in the market for greater brand recognition, though, consider a lesser-known jewel from a well-regarded house. Each of the major players—Veuve Clicquot, Taittinger, Krug, Pommery, Perrier-Jouët—sells a full complement of Champagnes. Look for something other than their entry-level

offerings: Pommery, for example, just launched its full-bodied, mostly Pinot Noir Wintertime, and while Perrier-Jouët may be familiar, few could identify its exquisite Ultra Brut label. Once your guests try this tangy effervescent, they'll remember it forever.

In Champagne making, the art of blending is the most revered aspect; winemakers start with still wines—Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier—and thus must anticipate what different combinations will taste like when they have been fermented into a Champagne. So after you pick a producer and the type of wine, decide whether you want vintage, which can be made with any blend of grapes from one harvest, or nonvintage, which combines the fermented grape juice of several harvests to achieve the perfect balance and desired style. Vintage wines that showcase grapes from only the very best harvests are highly prized and priced accordingly. (Recent award-winning vintages include 1990, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 2002.) In general, for aperitifs and the reception, opt for nonvintage; for serious food pairing, or a splurge, a premium vintage is the better bet.

Finally, be mindful of wedding-venue markups, which can run as high as two to three times the retail price, according to



Jung Lee, co-owner of Fête Event Planning and Design, in New York. But if you supply your own Champagne, Lee adds, you'll likely be charged a per-bottle corkage fee, which leads to perhaps the biggest question: how much do you actually need to order? "Count on three cases for every hundred guests and four if you plan on serving it during dinner, too," Lee says. And don't forget a few extra bottles, so the party can last all night. ❖

CHAMPAGNE CHEAT SHEET

Don't have enough time to sample every bottle of bubbly out there? Here are four types that are bound to impress.

BLANC DE BLANCS

Best for A black-tie affair.

Why This pure Chardonnay-only style is the ultimate in refinement. A true sophisticate's choice.

Top picks For a real treat, Mumm de Cramant from **G. H. Mumm** (\$60) is fabulous. Made solely from grapes from the *grand cru* village of Cramant, it's among the oldest examples of a *blanc de blancs* and an oft-forgotten classic from a major house. **Alfred Gratien**, one of the most traditional producers of Champagne, recently launched a nonvintage *blanc de blancs* (\$99) that captures all the purity and freshness of citrus fruits. It's great as an aperitif.

BLANC DE NOIRS

Best for Winter weddings.

Why Made exclusively from black-skinned grapes, a *blanc de noirs* is a voluptuous wine style that goes well with wintry dishes, like mushrooms and root vegetables.

Top picks **Bollinger**, James Bond's preferred house, ages its signature Special Cuvée (\$70), a mostly Pinot Noir blend, in casks, and for twice as long as the norm, which creates a complex wine with layers of roasted nuts. The star female biodynamic winemaker **Françoise Bedel** produces *Entre Ciel et Terre* (\$65), a surprisingly rich wine from the rarer black-skinned

Pinot Meunier grape. As a bonus, the colorful label, which depicts vines, the sun and the moon, will add a playful detail to your festivities and could become a conversation piece.

BRUT ZERO

Best for A seafood-themed beachside party.

Why This crisp, dry style is ideal for a reception with a raw bar.

Top picks **Tarlant** is a pro at brut zeros; unlike most Champagne houses, it doesn't add sugar in the final step of the winemaking process. Its Brut Zero (\$50) is nutty and has ripe yellow fruits. And with the Ultra Brut from **Laurent-Perrier**

(\$80), a superb example of this type, you'll delight your guests with a lesser-known bottle from a big vendor.

ROSÉ

Best for A spring garden celebration.

Why The pink-hued wine imparts summery, berry notes that fit in well with the outdoor scenery.

Top picks The Brut Prestige Rosé from **Taittinger** (\$93), bursting with wild strawberries and balanced with beautiful acidity, is good for pairing with hors d'oeuvres. From **Vilmart & Cie** comes cult grower-producer Laurent Champs's delicious spicy pink fizz Cuvée Rubis (\$70).