

Toasting to the Memory of Nicolas Feuillatte

Nicolas Feuillatte (pronounced Foo-Yatt), the legendary socialite and entrepreneur, passed away last month on August 12th at the age of 88. However, he will best be remembered as the visionary who started the Champagne brand that bears his name.

The Paris-born Feuillatte gave up the opportunity to run his family's lucrative business and instead came to New York in 1947 when he was just 21 years old. He eventually became the largest importer of African coffee into the United States, making a fortune selling coffee to companies like Folgers.

In 1966, Nicolas returned to France at the age of 40 and bought 30 acres in Champagne's Montagne de Reims and developed a vineyard originally named Domaine St.-Nicolas. He told Wine Spectator in 2003, "I loved the idea, because my name is Nicolas." Feuillatte initially produced Champagne to sell to his celebrity friends, who included Jackie Kennedy-Onassis, Princess Diana and Lauren Bacall.

Described as "daring and visionary in his approach" with "boundless energy and a profoundly independent spirit" and "a non-conformist," Feuillatte quickly grew the business into Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte, a company which now comprises 80 cooperatives spanning 5,000 growers and 2,225 hectares of vineyard land with a storage capacity of 100 million bottles.

In 2013, the company exported 10.4 million bottles of Champagne, making it the third best-selling Champagne brand in the world, just behind Moët & Chandon and Veuve Clicquot. It still remains the number one selling Champagne brand in France.

Nicolas Feuillatte produces a broad range of Champagnes, from an entry-level collection to a Grand Cru range designed to be enjoyed with food.

The **Non-vintage Nicolas Feuillatte Brut Réserve** is aged for at least 3 years in the cellar. A range of different crus make up the blend. The nose is initially restrained, with fresh white fruit scents of apple, pear and peach. Intermingle with curry and turmeric spices. The palate mimics the nose with more flavors of nectarine and peach with a touch of baked bread. The mouthfeel is ultra-clean on the attack, with an elegant and complex finish. Enjoy it with an aperitif of smoked salmon crostini. **\$28**

The **Non-vintage Nicolas Feuillatte Brut Rose** relies on its predominately pinot noir base to provide the aromas of red fruit, blueberry, blackcurrant and raspberry. The flavors of raspberry, strawberry and cranberry fruit are delicate on the palate and finishes with a clean, bright note. Enjoy with a dessert of strawberry tart. **\$36**

The **Non-vintage Nicolas Feuillatte Demi Sec** is aged in the cellar for at least 2 years, even though the legal minimum ageing requirement is only 15 months. Floral and fruity, it features flavors of peach, apricot and pastry notes with subtle sweet white fruit on the mid-palate and then developing toasty, vanilla notes on the finish. The mouthfeel is rounded and slightly sweet, revealing remarkable balance. Its dry and slightly sweet character is beautifully balanced on the palate. **\$50**

And finally, the crowning glory of Nicolas is the **2002 Nicolas Feuillatte Palmes d'Or Brut**. It encompasses all of the elegance and finesse of Chardonnay combined with the full body of Pinot Noir. Only harvests from exceptional sites, such as Le Mesnil, Chouilly and Ambonnay, are chosen for the cuvee. It is always aged for a minimum of *nine* years and housed in a dimpled black bottle that looks like a champagne cork. The nose features beautiful fruit aromas of white pear and peach and walnut. In the mouth, flavors of apricot, dried white fruit, candied ginger and red fruits subtly interweave with brioche notes, all carried across the palate by delicate bubbles. Fantastic structure is supported by magnificent mineral quality and provides an incredibly long and elegant finish. Perfect with lobster. **\$100**