



Who Really Makes Your Champagne? Decoding the Letters Behind the Label

Description

When we pick up a bottle of Champagne, we usually notice the producer's name, the vintage, or perhaps the price. But hidden in small print on every bottle is a set of letters that many people never notice.

These tiny codes such as **NM**, **RM**, **RC** or **CM** are not random abbreviations. They are official identification codes that tell you *who actually made the Champagne*.

Personally speaking, I came to know about these codes and their relevance to champagne only during my various WSET courses. Frankly that time these appeared very complex and it took me a while before I could grasp what each of these identification codes actually meant. However once I did, it all became very fascinating.

Now whereas these classifications have nothing to do with the quality of the champagne, they offer an interesting insight into the people and businesses behind every bottle. Once you know what they mean, you'll never look at a Champagne label the same way again.

NM – Négociant Manipulant

These are the famous Champagne Houses. They produce Champagne under their own brand using grapes, grape juice or base wine sourced from various growers, often alongside grapes from their own vineyards.

Examples: Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Bollinger.

RM – Récoltant Manipulant

These are independent grower-producers who cultivate their own vineyards and also make, age and bottle the Champagne themselves. They are commonly known as *Grower Champagnes*. Quite often these are smaller producers, some of whom have gained a strong reputation of making exceptional champagnes.



Image : Vinoing.com

Examples: Egly-Ouriet and Jacques Selosse.

RC à?? R  coltant Coop  rateur

These growers own and cultivate vineyards but have their grapes made into Champagne by a cooperative. The finished Champagne is then marketed under the grower  s own label. This enables many small family growers to bring their own Champagne to the market without investing in expensive winemaking facilities.

A fascinating example is **Champagne Chailiol & Charmetant**, owned by the **Singhal family**. The family is widely recognised as the *first Indian vigneron in Champagne*, creating a unique Indian connection with one of the world  s most celebrated wine regions.



Image : Champagne Challiol & Charmetant

Although the Singhal family acquired the estate in 2018, the Challiol & Charmetant label itself dates back to the 19th century. Interestingly, it was showcased at the Calcutta International Exhibition in 1883, held in honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria – a remarkable historical link between Champagne and India.

CM – Coopérative de Manipulation

Here, the cooperative itself produces and markets Champagne under its own brand using grapes supplied by its member growers.



CM written on bottom right. Image : Svinando.co.uk

Example: Nicolas Feuillatte is one of the best known examples associated with a cooperative.

SR ??? Soci  t   de R  coltants

A group of growers joins together to produce and market Champagne under a shared label while retaining ownership of their vineyards. This classification is relatively uncommon.

MA ??? Marque d  Acheteur

Literally meaning **   Buyer   s Own Brand**,    these are Champagnes sold under the label of a retailer, hotel, restaurant, airline or another business, while the wine itself is produced by an established Champagne producer.

ND ??? N  gociant-Distributeur

These are merchants who purchase finished Champagne and market it under their own label. This category is relatively rare today.

Does one classification produce better Champagne than another?

Absolutely not.

These codes simply describe *who made the Champagne and not how good it is*. Outstanding Champagnes can be found in every category, from iconic Champagne Houses to tiny family owned growers. The classification is about the producer   s role in the journey from vineyard to bottle, not a measure of quality.

So, the next time you uncork a bottle of Champagne, take a moment to look for those tiny letters on the label. They may seem insignificant, but they reveal an interesting story about the people behind the bubbles.

It could well happen that the smallest detail on a label tell the biggest story.

Cover Image     l-express.ca

Cheers !!