

By Dindy Yokel

MOËT & CHANDON
Fondé en 1743



Georges Blanck, Chef de Cave for Moët & Chandon is in Miami to attend the South Beach Wine & Food Festival and host the celebrated Moët & Chandon BubbleQ on March 5, 2004. This is his first visit to the area and we welcome him with an upraised glass of bubbly – Moët & Chandon, naturally.

Born in Alsace, France, Georges Blanck received his degree in Agronomic Engineering and Winemaking from the Institut Agronomique Paris-Grignon. He then went on to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Montpellier where he received his degree in Viticulture and Oenology.

Georges Blanck joined Moët & Chandon as a member of the winemaking team and in this capacity he has traveled the world monitoring production of the champagne portfolio. He developed blending procedures specific to the terroir of Moët & Chandon vineyards. He then became the custodian of quality for the various Moët & Chandon cuvées.

We spent some time with Georges Blanck discussing his role at Moët & Chandon, his background and the best selling marque, Moët & Chandon White Star.

DY: *We have heard that you are a perfectionist, what does this mean to the end product?*

GB: With each vintage I work diligently to create new taste sensations to captivate the most discerning and refined champagne palates. I strive to create contemporary, innovative and subtle assemblages and renew existing tastes of surprising elegance. I am committed to Moët & Chandon and to carrying on the tradition of champagne as a proud part of the French heritage.

DY: *Moët & Chandon White Star is very popular in the U.S. market. Can you tell us a little of the history behind this champagne.*

GB: Moët & Chandon introduced White Star in 1880 as an extra-dry champagne for the export market. Upscale, but accessible due to a thoughtful and natural winemaking process with absolute respect for the fruit, these are the qualities that have given White Star its place as the leader in the champagne category today.

DY: *What are the tasting notes of White Star?*

GB: A balanced blend of Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. Breathe in and you will discover soft, mature aromas and flavors of white fruits (peaches) and hints of nuts. You will find a savoury attack, with a smooth and juicy mid-palate, and a clean, crisp and refreshing finish.

DY: *How can you tell the difference between the marques from looking at the label?*

GB: White Star has a silver star on the label to differentiate it from Brut Impérial that features a gold star on the label. The star has always been featured on the label of all champagnes in the Moët & Chandon family since the beginning of the 19th century to commemorate the appearance of Haley's Comet in 1811. Since this time it has been thought that comets appear to announce the grands millésimes.

DY: *Miami is turning into a real restaurant town and we have some exquisite chefs. Tell me your philosophy about pairing White Star and food?*

GB: White Star needs a simple and double balance between fruit and acidity: high richness and sweetness while

retaining freshness, only slightly bitter and salty. Favor simple combinations with two to three complementary ingredients. To the forefront, sweet citrus fruits and white-fleshed fruit. Fat white fish, in particular poached, white meat and poultry, poached or roasted, in creamy sauces. Accompany with sweet, sugary vegetables; season with sweet spices. Contrasting textures; tender, supple, melting and crispy, crunchy, even sticky. A multicolor universe with average contrasts.

DY: *What are your thoughts about pairing White Star or champagne in general with typical American fare such as hot dogs and pizza? We have heard that champagne does not pair well with tomato sauce, is this so?*

GB: White Star is the most popular champagne from France. The softer fruit character and the superb balance found in White Star blends harmoniously with food, even dishes that feature tomato sauce or flavorful herbs and spices (not to hot). With tomato sauce, I would recommend Brut Impérial Rosé, which is well in balance with the Mediterranean spirit.

DY: *The Miami market is filled with ethnic restaurants including Thai, Cuban, Italian, Mexican, Chinese and Japanese. In your opinion, does White Star pair well with these various cuisines?*

GB: White Star, when paired with food, shows a great depth and versatility. It is open to world cuisines and thus able to show its contemporary daring side, including Thai, Cuban, Italian, Mexican, Chinese or Japanese cuisines. Our approach about wine and food pairing is without preconceptions, knowing that the most unusual associations sometimes prove to be the most extraordinary!

DY: *What is the optimum pairing with White Star?*

GB: White Star pairs well with seafood including crab cakes, lobster or oysters as well as simple combinations complemented by fresh fruit. A fine balance between fruit and acidity bring out the characteristics of the champagne. I also recommend white meat and poultry that has been roasted or poached. Creamy sauces and vegetables seasoned with sweet spices complete the meal.

Dindy Yokel is president and founder of DindyCo PR & Marketing of Miami Beach, a full-service firm known for its innovative concepts for national and international clients.