



Champagne Keeps Churchill Legend Alive



© chapuis-photo.com; AFP; Pol Roger | Champagne helped Churchill guide Britain through its darkest hours.

50 years after his death, British wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill lives on in Pol Roger's prestige cuvée.

By [Claire Adamson](#) | Posted Saturday, 31-Jan-2015

"My tastes are simple: I am easily satisfied with the best."

Sir Winston Churchill, easily Britain's most fondly remembered prime minister, was a big fan of the finer things in life. This week marks the 50th anniversary of his death aged 90 – a cause, if not for celebration, then most certainly for a glass of [Champagne](#), and preferably Pol Roger.

Much is made of Churchill's love of the stuff. Many put it down to a seating plan at a luncheon in Paris in 1944 that sat him next to Odette [Pol Roger](#), with whom he struck up an immediate friendship. The two drank the 1928 vintage of her eponymous bubbles together, and from then on, Pol Roger ensured that Churchill was furnished with a case on his birthday – one every year until his death. In turn, he named his favorite racehorse Pol Roger, and would place a bet in her name every time the horse raced.

The truth is that Churchill had been enjoying Champagne – and in particular Pol Roger – for years. He held it up as one of his wartime necessities: "In victory I deserve it; in defeat, I need it." His troops felt his passion for the great sparkling wine as well – during World War II he said: "Remember gentlemen, it's not just France we are fighting for, it's Champagne!"

Churchill even went so far as to compare his good friend Franklin Roosevelt to his beloved beverage, saying: "Meeting Franklin Roosevelt was like opening your first bottle of Champagne; knowing him was like drinking it."



© Wikimedia/Public Domain; Pol Roger | He never let his troops forget what they were fighting for.

After his meeting with Odette, he quickly forgot any loyalties he had to other Champagne houses and became a lifelong devotee of Pol Roger. Today, his house, Chartwell in Kent, southeast England, is a testament to this; a bottle of his favorite 1928 vintage Pol Roger is on display, in the imperial pint bottle that he preferred and specially requested.

Churchill died on January 24, 1965. Odette Pol Roger attended his funeral, and all the Pol Roger bottles shipped to England following his death were given a black border in mourning for the great man – a stylistic feature that remained in place until 1990. In 1984, Pol Roger's greatest tribute to a friend was realized, and the [Cuvée Winston Churchill](#) was released, its inaugural vintage the 1975.

Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill is now Pol Roger's prestige cuvée, on a par with [Dom Pérignon](#), [La Belle Époque](#) or [La Grande Dame](#). The wine is made in the style of which Churchill himself was fond; there is considerably more Pinot Noir than Chardonnay in the blend, although the family keeps the exact blend under wraps.

The cuvée serves as an apt homage to the man who saw the United Kingdom through World War II; the tasting note describes the wine as being "mindful of the qualities that [Churchill] sought in his Champagne: robustness, a full-bodied character and relative maturity".

Churchill was an avid drinker outside of Champagne, enjoying Port and Bordeaux wines in particular. He was rarely seen sans cigar, and has several named after him – the Churchill is Romeo y Julieta's flagship cigar. According to the memoirs of White House chief butler Alonzo Fields, he was also partial to Sherry, brandy and a couple of scotch and sodas before lunchtime. However, Champagne was his first love, and the one that he is remembered for in the wine drinking world.

Churchill is widely regarded as Britain's greatest wartime prime minister, and was still a regular at Parliament well into his 80s. He traveled extensively throughout his life, but never made it to Epernay to stomp grapes as he had promised Odette Pol Roger. That did not stop him from proclaiming Pol Roger's cellars at 44 Avenue de Champagne "the most drinkable address in the world".