



J. LASSALLE

Three generations at the helm

"We have three strong characters, but we need character for our job," says Angéline Templier. She's referring to herself, her mother, Chantal Decelle-Lassalle, and her grandmother, Olga Lassalle, who together are the driving force behind the Champagne house of J. Lassalle, a successful small- to medium-sized *récoltant-manipulant* in the village of Chigny-les-Roses, just south of Reims.

When Olga's husband, Jules, passed away in 1982, she took over the business; fortunately, her daughter Chantal already had training

93	Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne 2004	\$78
92	Brut Champagne Cuvée Angéline 2007	\$72
92	Brut Champagne Préférence NV	\$48
92	Brut Rosé Champagne NV	\$62
91	Brut Champagne NV	\$44

—Alison Napjus

in vinification from her father. Together they built the company from a small, 15-acre property in 1982 to nearly twice that size today, with 27 acres and an annual production of about 100,000 bottles.

Templier joined the company in 2006, after attending business school in Paris and pursuing a career in luxury goods with Yves Saint Laurent for a number of years. But the family business called her back to the Champagne region, and after enological and agricultural studies at the Centre de Formation Professionnelle et de Promotion Agricole in Avize, she returned to J. Lassalle to take her place as winemaker at the house.

Shortly after Templier's arrival, an adjacent building was purchased, and the winery was expanded into this new property in 2007. A key addition

to the new space was a number of temperature-controlled stainless-steel tanks that allow Templier to vinify many of the estate's parcels separately, particularly those destined for vintage bottlings. "Everything is easy with these tanks," says Templier, who adds jokingly, "We don't need any men to help."

Although Templier brings a modern education in winemaking with her, the estate is very much grounded in its history. It still uses the traditional press that Templier's grandfather installed in 1965; and until three years ago, when a longtime employee in charge of labeling decided to retire, all of the labeling was done by hand. And while many in Champagne have converted to gyropalettes for the important riddling process, all of the bottles at J. Lassalle are still riddled by hand.

"The spirit here is to still evolve, but to really keep the traditions that my grandfather began," says Templier. In that vein—and despite market demand for the house's wines—the non-vintage and vintage bottlings see cellar aging far beyond the legal minimum, with as much as 10 years for the vintage wines.

Templier may be in charge of winemaking now, but her mother is still very much involved in all aspects of production at J. Lassalle, just as her grandmother helps with the management and administration of the house. Templier explains that this close-knit working relationship with family members can have its difficulties, but overall they've found a good balance.

"Sometimes you have to put some barriers between the personal and the professional," Templier says. "But I have always had the feeling that we're in a boat together. We are a team."