



**Arlequin One Bottle Club**  
**December 2018**  
**A.R. LeNoble Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs “Chouilly”**  
**Vintage 2008**  
**Champagne, France**

**Grape Varieties:** 100% Chardonnay

**Winemaker:** Champagne A.R. LeNoble dates its founding to 1915, when Armand-Raphael Graser moved from his native Alsace to Champagne, in the midst of the bitter frontier battles of World War I. By 1920 he had moved into an 18th Century building in the village of Damery, in Champagne’s prime Marne Valley zone and started to make champagne under the A.R. Lenoble label. (“A.R.” comes from Armand-Raphael’s initials and, not wanting to have a German-sounding last name at that particular moment in history, he invented “Lenoble”, as a tribute to the nobility of Champagne.) Still wholly family-owned, the estate is run today by A.R.’s great-grandchildren, Anne Malassagne and Antoine Malassagne.

**Vintage:** Two-thousand-and-eight is, along with 2002, one of the best Champagne vintages of the aughts. A cool summer finally heated up at the end of the season with two gloriously sunny, dry weeks leading into harvest. The result was a vintage of classically styled Champagnes typified by scintillating acidity and an ample counterbalance of seductive fruit. Overall, Champagne’s 2002 wines represent a return to a classic, dry style of yesteryear.

**Vineyard:** Although Lenoble does work with purchased grapes, their quality of their wines is founded on fruit from their excellent vineyards, which supply the majority of their grapes. The crown jewel of their holdings are 27 acres in Chouilly, a *grand cru* village that sits at the northernmost tip of the Chardonnay-dominated Côtes des Blancs. These vines include parts of some of the villages best *climats*, including “Les Montaignus,” “Les Cités,” and “Les Aventures.”

**Winemaking:** Antoine Malassagne is notoriously meticulous in his winemaking. At harvest, the grapes are always picked by hand and taken quickly to the winery in Damery, where they are sorted by variety and quality. The very best *grand cru* Chardonnay grapes from Chouilly are reserved for this *blanc de blancs* vintage cuvée. Malassagne uses a traditional, vertical wooden press and only incorporates first-run juice—not a drop of the more bitter, second-press juice is ever used. In 2008, he fermented this wine chiefly in steel vats, with just a very small (10%) portion in oak barrels, in order to preserve the wine’s chalky, mineral-driven freshness. Aged on its lees for eight years, the wine was then disgorged and given a *dosage* of just 4 grams of sugar per liter (well below the limit of 12 grams/liter permitted for a brut Champagne.)

**Tasting Notes:** An intense, bright yellow-gold color gives the first clue to this wine’s long aging on its lees. Its aromas are redolent of lemon zest, almond shells and wet stones, along with a citrusy-floral note that reminds us of bergamot (the citrus fruit that flavors Earl Gray tea.) On the palate, it’s textbook *blanc de blancs*, with racy citrus, chalk and brioche flavors that offer terrific length, grip and lift. The low dosage and high acidity are typical of LeNoble’s elegant, dry house style, while the wine’s chalky freshness shows the pedigree of its superb *grand cru* terroir. Although a decade old, this wine is still young relative to its potential age. This intense, fabulously cut vintage Champagne has every marker needed to indicate a long life ahead of it. We suggest popping one bottle now, then laying in a stash to drink now through to 2025.

**Food Pairing:** Champagne is one of the world’s greatest, most versatile wines to pair with food. And while, yes, of course, this *blanc de blancs* makes a terrific companion to hors d’oeuvres (including oysters, smoked salmon, caviar, gougères, buttered popcorn and mini grilled cheeses), it’s also a brilliant pairing for first courses and main dishes galore. For a complementary pairing, go for light, clean, delicate fare such as salads, sashimi, fish tacos, poached fish with lemon, herbs and olives. And for a contrasting match, and try it with fatty, salty foods. Our favorite pairings include shrimp tempura, fried chicken and halibut with a lemon cream sauce. Whatever you do, don’t drink this wine with dessert or any sweet foods: Because it’s bone dry, the food will make the wine taste bitter.