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wine, which was a huge quantity for the time. His son Jean Clément subsequently took over, extending and then renting the vines to his son-in-law Jacky Météyer, who became the founder of the Champagne Météyer domain.

Today Pierre's great grandson Frank and his wife Anna manage the domain. The couple work together as Independent Winegrowers (RM), running the 14 hectares that make up the vineyard and organising various Champagne-themed touristic and educational activities whilst producing and commercialising a range of nine high quality 'cuvées'.

In the Champagne calendar, every season brings its share of hard work: planting, debudding or binding the vines in spring, trellising and trimming them in summer, the all-important autumn harvest and pressing followed by the winter pruning. In spite of the exhausting work involved, the favourite time for the husband and wife team is harvest time. «It's the most effervescent time of the year!» they say, «The ambiance is festive and the vineyards are crowded! It is the reward of a year's hard work.»

As harvesting machines are strictly forbidden in the Champagne region,



WHEN CHAMPAGNE IS A FAMILY AFFAIR

By Jacqueline Taylor

Champagne...The mere mention of the word conjures up sparkling images of happy faces and festive times. It is one of France's most prized and most exported products; enjoyed and acclaimed throughout the world. For centuries this golden beverage has been associated with high living. Since July 2015, the hillsides, houses and cellars of the Champagne region have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, in recognition of their importance to the collective interests of humanity for their cultural and historical significance.

For six generations the Météyer family has strived to preserve and perfect the art of producing fine Champagnes. Their dedication has earned them several awards including this year's «Pierre Cheval de l'Embellissement» award for best winegrower.

The family's association with champagne began way back in the 1860s, when Pierre Clément inherited a hectare of vines from his father-in-law on the hillsides of Trélou-sur-Marne. The first person in his village to install his own press, in 1929 he produced about 32,000 litres of

hand, by a team of 60-70 seasonal harvesters. This manual operation ensures that only the best grapes are selected. The precious berries are then quickly transported the press to be weighed before the pressing process begins. When all the juices are finally in the vats it is the crowning moment of a year's hard labour.

The vineyard has three varieties of grape - Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier- and as the vines are not all planted in the same location, each one benefits from a different micro climate. This means that whatever the weather conditions, the Mé-



téyers are sure to be able to produce a good crop from one of them. (For information, we have been assured that 2017 is a good year!)

The grape picking process may not have changed much over the last six generations, but that doesn't mean that the Météyers haven't changed their approach to viniculture. About ten years ago, they decided to implement sustainable farming and have been committed to preserving the environment whilst ensuring the quality of their produce ever since. They are, however, convinced that

their Champagnes have always contributed to good health. Franck's great grand-father was a 'Poilu' and the last survivor of the First World War in Picardy. He lived to the great age of 107, was never sick and all he ever drank in his life was Météyer Champagnes. Now there's a recipe for longevity many of us would happily adopt!

In keeping with the times, the Météyers have taken their business further than just producing and selling Champagne. They also offer guided tours of their domain in

English, French and Polish, with visits to the wine cellars and to their unique Champagne museum, where visitors can learn more about the Champagne legacy. All of the tours naturally end with a Champagne tasting in a recently renovated XVIIIth century cellar. The couple also organise Champagne and food pairing workshops and temporary art exhibitions by artists from around the world - a fun idea for a day trip from Paris, as the domain is just an hour and a half's drive away. It is also possible to order one or more bottles with a personalised label, if you are looking to make someone a very special gift.

You can find more information about the tours they offer, their products and several tips for keeping, serving and enjoying Champagne on the Météyers' website: www.champagne-meteyer.com