

THE CHAMPAGNE DECODED OVER A SIP AND A BITE

"In victory, you deserve Champagne, in defeat, you need it." — Napoleon Bonaparte

And you crave it when the festivities kick in! Ushering in the month of revelry, The Park recently held a champagne degustation, organised by the Comite Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (joint trade association of all houses and growers in Champagne) and hosted by the ambassador of Champagne in India, **RAJIV SINGHAL** (inset). t2 caught up with Singhal on all things bubbly...



Though wine has picked up in Calcutta, champagne is still seen as a luxury drink...

That mindset is changing. More people in the city drink champagne now and there are a lot of special champagne brunches as well.

Those have helped break the ice, pegging champagne as something to be drunk with food, like wine, and not just a luxury drink. If the market is tough, it is more because of taxation laws than consumers.

Champagne is now ready to be reckoned as an all-day drink.

An all-day drink?

Drink it at breakfast or at four in the afternoon, have it at lunch and dinner. Which other drink can you do that with and not feel the impact on your physiology?

What is the best thing about champagne? Is there any other drink that you like?

Nothing! I only drink champagne. And that's by choice. I have always had champagne. Its health effects are only positive and therefore many people follow the Champagne Diet. It has very limited calories compared to other wines. According to new research, champagne has anti-ageing properties and also helps fight blood pressure problems.

Sneha Dutta



Pictures: B. Halder

On the degustation menu were six kinds of champagne — Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin, Taittinger, Drappier (Brut Non-Vintage), Philippe Gonet (Blanc de Blancs), Krug Grande Cuvee (Prestige Cuvee) and Laurent Perrier Rose (Brut Rose). Sharad Dewan, director, food production, The Park, whipped up six special dishes to pair with the bubbly. "The ultimate judge of pairing is your palate," said Rajiv Singhal, while Dewan added: "I believe foods with a strong aroma are not the best choice with champagne because it has its own character."

Guests also got some tips on the many ways to open a bottle — without making a noise or the Formula One way of making a splash.

CHEF SHARAD DEWAN'S PAIRINGS



The strong flavour of Krug Grande Cuvee, voted the best champagne of the day, blended perfectly with the sweetness of Chicken Teriyaki



Open Samosa with Ghugni Chaat complemented the fruity Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin



Chingri Malai Curry on rice, Chicken Pizza and Salmon Risotto were the picks for Philippe Gonet, Taittinger and Drappier, respectively



At the end came this mille-feuille of Makha Sandesh and Mihidana in a tulip glass, paired with the pink Laurent Perrier Rose. "You can't think of pairing anything else other than a dessert with a rose," said Dewan