



WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

IN THE YEARS we have been writing our Tastings column, which appears on Fridays, we have received thousands of questions about wine from readers. In this column, we answer some questions that touch on common themes. We have edited the questions for space. If you have a question, drop us a note at wine@wsj.com. Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

BIG BUBBLY

I got into an interesting discussion over the holidays about large-format Champagne. I know real Champagne is fermented in the bottle and this can take years. So would it be true that larger bottles would be released after the standard bottles? I would assume the fermentation process would take longer in the larger bottles. Or is the wine fermented in standard bottles then repackaged into magnums, etc., to ensure

consistency?

—Rob Nelson,
Los Angeles

Real Champagne, from the Champagne region of France, is packaged in bottles ranging from the petite quarter-bottle to enormous bottles that are more for show and publicity than tonight's dinner. All pro-



ducers of magnum-sized bottles (1.5 liter) and some producers of Jéroboam bottles (3 liter) ferment in the bottle, according to Sam Heitner, director of the Office of Champagne, USA. The fermentation process for the magnum or Jéroboam-sized bottles does not take longer be-

cause each bottle has the proportionate amount of yeast, alcohol and liquid by volume, he told us. Most larger-format bottles, beyond the Jéroboam size, are repackaged with wine that was fermented in smaller bottles. One exception is the Champagne house Drappier, Mr. Heitner said. It carries out fermentation in all of its big bottles, including its giant, 30-liter size, which the winery has specially made so that it can withstand more than 70 pounds of pressure per square inch, according to the winery.

—Melanie Grayce West
contributed to this column.