ERIC RODEZ CUVÉE DES GRANDS VINTAGES NV • $$$

95 points • TASTED IN AMBONNAY

30% 2004, 21% 2002, 18% 2000, 13% 1999, 9% 1998, 6% 1996 and 2% 1995, all aged separately in barrel or tank; 70% pinot noir, 30% chardonnay; average vine age 33 years; fully vinified in barrels; no malolactic fermentation; 4g/L dosage

The philosophy here is an assemblage of the fruits of the first pressings of the best parcels across many years. The roll-call of vintages is mind-blowing, not only in that it averages 12 years of age on release, but that it plunders the greatest seasons of two decades, a line-up that must be unparalleled in all of Champagne, except perhaps in Krug itself, at three times the price. Its deep, layered complexity matches the recipe: generous stone fruits, figs, honey, toast, roast nuts and mixed spice of all kinds. For all of its vast intensity and full-bodied proportions, it maintains absolute control and balance, making way for fine-grained, pronounced, salty minerality to draw the finish out long and fine. The harmony on show in this melody is a masterpiece of Rodez’s talent as a composer.