

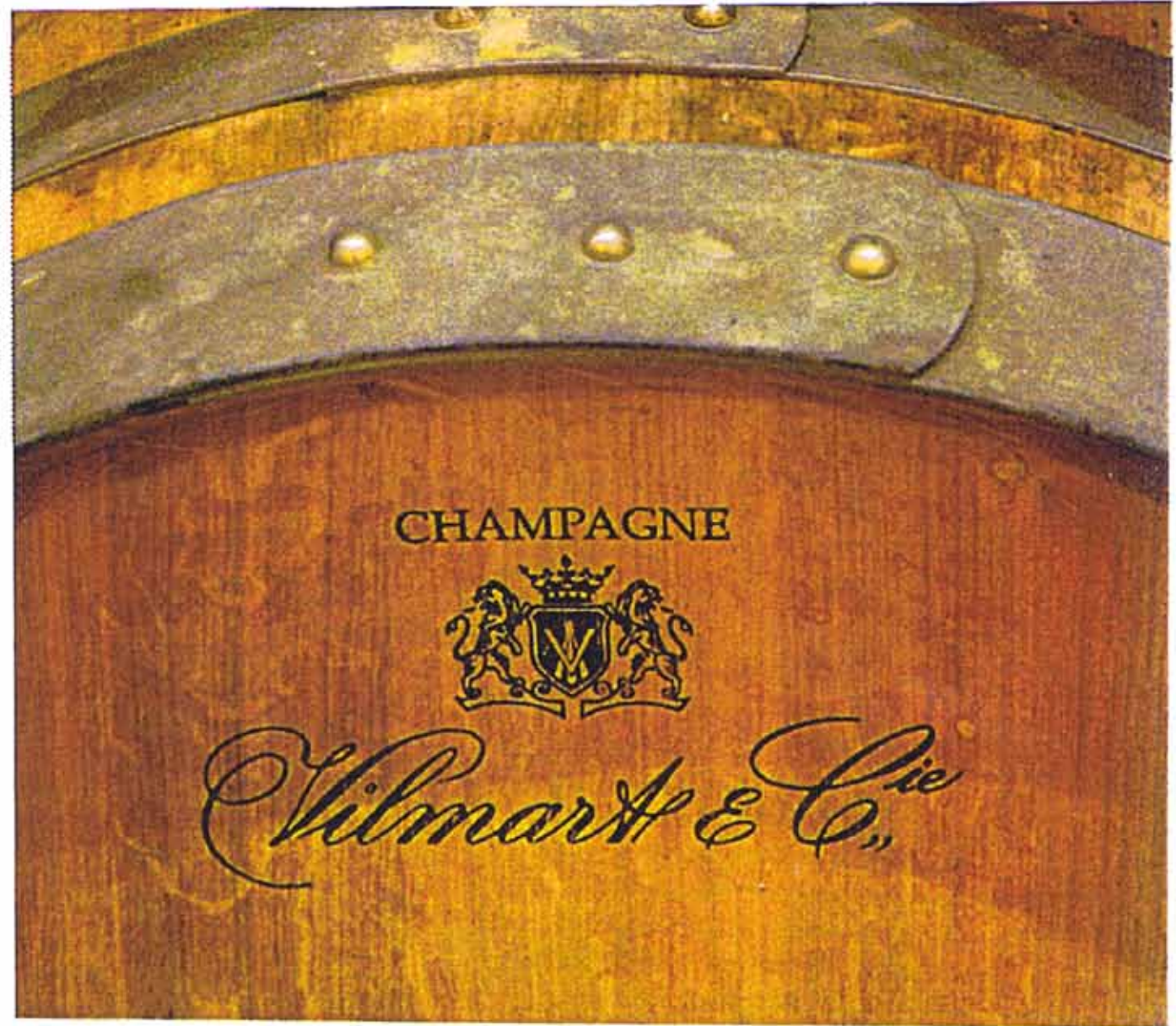
VILMART is number one in my top 10 because no matter how high the quality climbs, the aspiration to achieve even greater heights never falters. This passion has its roots in the soil, beginning in 1968, when René Champs converted Vilmart's vineyards to organic method. Nearly 40 years ago, in one of the wettest and hardest wine regions for organic production, Laurent Champs took over from his father in 1995, after working with him for five years, and it is the improvements made by Laurent as he has reined back the new oak influence in his top cuvées (Coeur de Cuvée and, to a lesser extent, Cuvée Création) that puts Vilmart in its number one slot today.

■ **Vilmart, Coeur de Cuvée 1997**

★★★★★

Great intensity of fruit, beautifully expressive and, like the 1996, not too much oak. Delicious now, but has years of life ahead. The 1998 is even better.

£50.31; Evy



Above: Champagne Vilmart is Tom Stevenson's greatest improver in Champagne for 2006 for its organic production and seriously good vintage Champagnes. Below: Bollinger makes sure it is constantly improving its production, even though it is one of the grandes marques of the region