

POP THAT CORK AND TAKE A SIP OF THE BUBBLY!
IT'S VICTORIOUS WOMAN MONTH
TIME TO CELEBRATE VICTORIES OF THE PAST YEAR AND
RAISE YOUR GLASS IN SALUTE TO WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED!

Next, after you take that first sip, once the bubbles tickle your nose and you start to feel the warmth of a champagne buzz, raise your glass again. This time to Veuve Clicquot, whose business acumen made champagne the drink it is today.

Born Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin, she was the daughter of wealthy parents. In 1798, she married Francois Clicquot, the son of a wealthy merchant and champagne maker. Shortly after the wedding, Clicquot's father turned over the reins of the champagne business to his son. Meanwhile Madame Clicquot took over the role of a typical matron, that is, she managed the household, became a mother, and socialized with other women of her social class.

Then, in 1805, Francois died suddenly of a fever. Madame Clicquot's father-in-law was too old to run the champagne business and thought he would sell it. Madame Clicquot had other ideas. Going against the customs of polite society, and shocking the all-male business community, Madame took over the business.

Using a business sense that most people of that time didn't think women could have, Veuve Clicquot (Widow Clicquot) ran her the family business well. Not only did she follow traditional paths, but she found new ways for distribution and opened new markets in Europe, including Russia. The Russian market was quite a coup because it was mostly lost to merchants due to the Napoleonic wars.

Perhaps Veuve Clicquot's greatest achievement, and the one we can all be grateful for today, is the invention of the riddling table. We wouldn't even know now that a major problem in the production and promotion of champagne was the collection of sediment from yeast and other matter; sediment affected the clarification of the wine, which made it unattractive both in the bottle and the glass. In an effort to improve production, Madame tinkered with the process. She discovered that turning the bottles upside down and then right side up, for a period of weeks, allowed for all the sediment to collect at the top. Once it was firmly there, it could be easily removed before the bottle was sealed. To facilitate the process, she cut holes into a table so the bottles could be stored with the neck down. Her wine chef later refined the process and other champagne-makers quickly adopted it; it's the same basic method still used today, though mostly done by machine. However, riddling tables or racks are still purchased by small wine-makers and hobbyists.

Veuve Clicquot ignored the social constraints of her day, and as a single mother, was one of the first businesswomen in history. She succeeded beyond everyone's imagination. She used her talents to bring champagne into prominence as her company became the first champagne dynasty. The company, still bearing her name, thrives to this day.

Barbe-Nicole Clicquot Ponsardin was known then and is still considered that today the "Grand Dame of de la Champagne" – and we honor her victories every time fill those tall, lovely glasses with the wine of celebration.

À VOTRE SANTÉ, VICTORIOUS WOMAN!