

The Champagne Notebook

4 What can you see?

First learn to look at Champagnes... the nuances and subtleties of their colours and the difference in the way they sparkle tell you a great deal about their diversity.

6 What can you smell?

Inhale, smell, smell again... this is the second step in your journey of discovery. The aromas of Champagne create bouquets you can learn to recognise.

8 What can you taste?

Fleshy, smooth, delicate or complex, discover the dominant character of your Champagne and the family it belongs to.

12 Define the Champagne's spirit

Be creative as well as a gourmet. When harmonising Champagne with your imagination, you can create aperitifs, lunches, gifts, buffets and special dinners.

18 Develop your senses

You can become an expert taster through a few easy exercises. You will learn the language of Champagne and find it easy to fill in the tasting sheet. You will find that from now on Champagne will no longer hold any secrets for you.



How to taste
Champagne
wines

number 2

COMITÉ INTERPROFESSIONNEL DU VIN DE CHAMPAGNE

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Champagne Notebook

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Champagne and YOU...

Perhaps it all goes back a long way.
Perhaps you believe that you have always
known, always loved Champagne and
already associate it with many occasions in
your life. But what sort of connoisseur are
you? Have you taken the time **to look at**
the colour of the Champagnes you are
about to drink? **To smell** them?

To **uncover the tastes** on your palate?
You don't think about it? You daren't?
You find that it's all too difficult? That this
sort of ritual should be reserved to the
initiated? Yet Champagne is also **a wine**.
So? So, things are simpler than you
thought. As simple as the replies to the
following questions.

With my eyes closed can I tell the
difference between the aroma of
a rose and that of a violet?

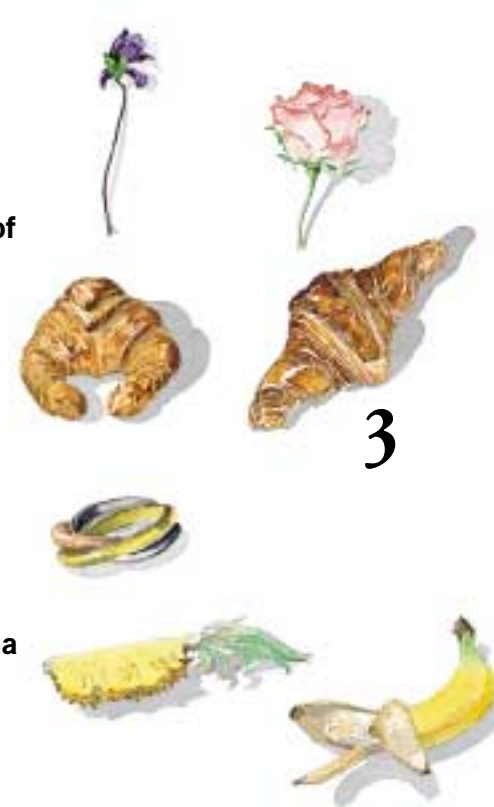
Can I tell the difference between
butter and margarine?

Do all brands of bottled waters
taste alike?

Can my eyes distinguish between
white, yellow and pink gold?

Is my palate sensitive to the
difference in texture of a banana
and a pineapple?

Can I tell when a loved one changes
his or her perfume?



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**You probably make such
distinctions instinctively.**

Similarly, when exploring the
world of Champagne, you use
all your senses. This Champagne
Notebook will help you to
discover the diversity of aromas,
tastes and nuances of colour in
different Champagnes. So, find
a quiet time and place alone or
with your friends, and simply
turn the page.

Are you ready?



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coral pink

salmon pink

grey gold

green gold

Champagne's visual palette offers many nuances of colour, from off-white with a trace of yellow to old gold, from coral pink to salmon pink. Once you can really start to tell them apart you enter a world which is unique in its subtlety. Try to express the particular a whole range of sensations and associate one of them with what you are experiencing.

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straw

yellow gold

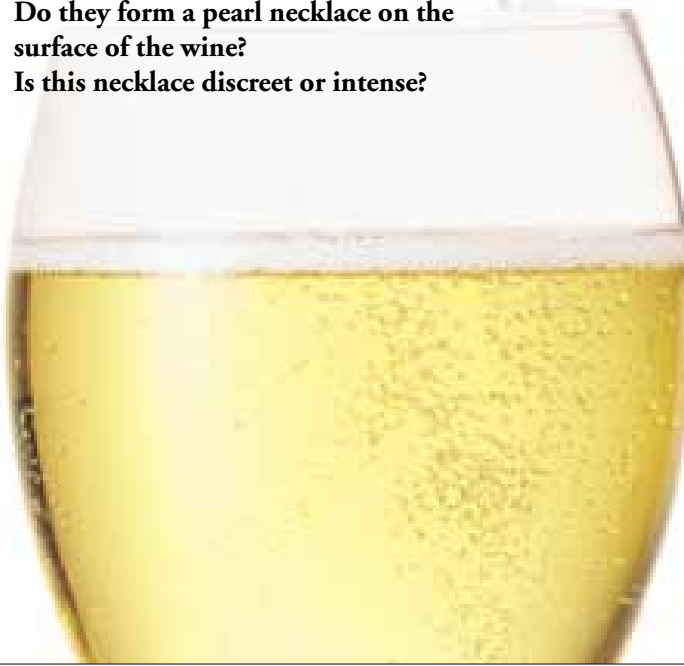
old gold

What can you see?

And the bubbles?

Are they lively, delicate, plentiful?
Do they form a pearl necklace on the
surface of the wine?
Is this necklace discreet or intense?

Remember that the glass plays a very important role in the effervescence of Champagne. If the bubbles seem to dissipate in the glass, don't assume that the wine is flat. Simply change your glass. Then take a first sip, and shut your eyes, you'll realise that the effervescence is indeed there, on your palate.



What can you smell?

Champagne is a wine whose bouquet deserves your total attention. So take your time from the first moment that you are inhaling its aromas. **Inhale** slowly, at length... and then begin again. The bouquet of Champagne can be divided into different categories. Does it remind you of **flowers** or **fruits**, of **vegetables**, of **dried fruit**, or some **delicacy**? Or do you detect many of these families at the same time?

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Epicurean bouquet

Country bouquet

Bouquet of dried fruit

Floral bouquet

Bouquet of fresh fruit

Structure, intensity - you are in the world of Champagnes with Body

Body

Sprightliness, lightness, delicacy - these are the qualities of Champagnes with Spirit

Spirit

A Champagne reveals its personality best on the palate. Dare to keep the wine in your mouth for a few moments and swirl it around. Give yourself the time to allow the full array of flavours to develop.

What can you taste?

As with any other wine you are inevitably left with a single overriding impression. Study these four images which each evoke a whole range of sensations and associate one of them with what you are experiencing.

Soul

Maturity, complexity, richness - these betoken Champagnes with Soul

Heart

Harmony, warmth, smoothness - these are expressed by Champagnes with Heart

What have you found?

You have just discovered that your Champagne is a member of one of the four families on the chart,

depending on the dominant impression that it offers.

Now try and define more precisely the **specific sensation** that the Champagne you are tasting inspires in you: charm, tenderness, sensuality.

Do not hesitate to retaste it if you are not sure. Different **styles** of Champagnes correspond to these more specific impressions:

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- Brut or demi-sec
- Vintage or a blend of vintages
- Blanc de Blancs or Blanc de Noirs or a blend of black and white grapes dominated by Chardonnay, by Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Meunier
- Young, mature or opulent

To discover what style of Champagne you are drinking you can look at the label. Or you can get the information from your wine merchant or from the Champagne firm itself. If you are in a restaurant, ask the wine waiter. In this way you can find your way amongst the many different types of Champagne.

A final piece of advice: watch out, because Champagnes **evolve** over time, whether they are in the maker's cellars, the wine merchant's or your home. As a result their position on the tasting chart can also change.

Body

sensuality

Brut Vintage
Brut NV, mature
Brut NV, young, dominated by Pinot Meunier
Brut NV, young, dominated by Pinot Noir
Brut NV, rosé, older, dominated by Pinot Noir
NV, Demi-sec, young

charm

Brut Vintage, Blanc de Blancs, mature
Brut Vintage, Blanc de Blancs, opulent

intelligence

Brut Vintage, Blanc de Blancs
Brut Vintage, dominated by Chardonnay

romanticism

Brut Vintage, rosé, dominated by black grapes
Brut Vintage, opulent, dominated by black grapes

passion

Brut Vintage, Blanc de Noirs, opulent
Brut Vintage, rosés dominated by the Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier
Prestige Cuvées, non-vintage mature
Prestige Cuvées, dominated by Chardonnay, NV, mature

rapture

Brut Vintage, opulent

Brut NV, rosés, mature
Prestige Cuvées, Vintage, mature

union

mysticism

Prestige Cuvées
Rare & older Vintages
Collectors' Champagnes

Spirit

Bruts, NV, Blanc de Noirs, young.
Bruts, NV, rosés, dominated by Chardonnay, young.

enthusiasm

Brut Vintage, mature
Brut Vintage, mature, dominated by Pinot Noir
Brut Vintage, rosé, mature, dominated by Pinot Noir
NV, Demi-sec, mature

tenderness

Soul

Heart

Serve Champagne as an aperitif. A **Champagne with Spirit** makes an excellent choice because of its liveliness and sparkle, and carry through the idea with brio and originality. Serve unusual 'amuse-bouches', witty canapés, and inventive snacks.

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The Spirit comes first



For example:

Smoked breast of duck and black olive tapenade on toasted bread.

Smoked salmon roulade garnished with lobster mousse, parsley & basil.

Slice of foie gras on toasted brioche.

Shrimp cocktail canapé.

Cheddar cheese straws.

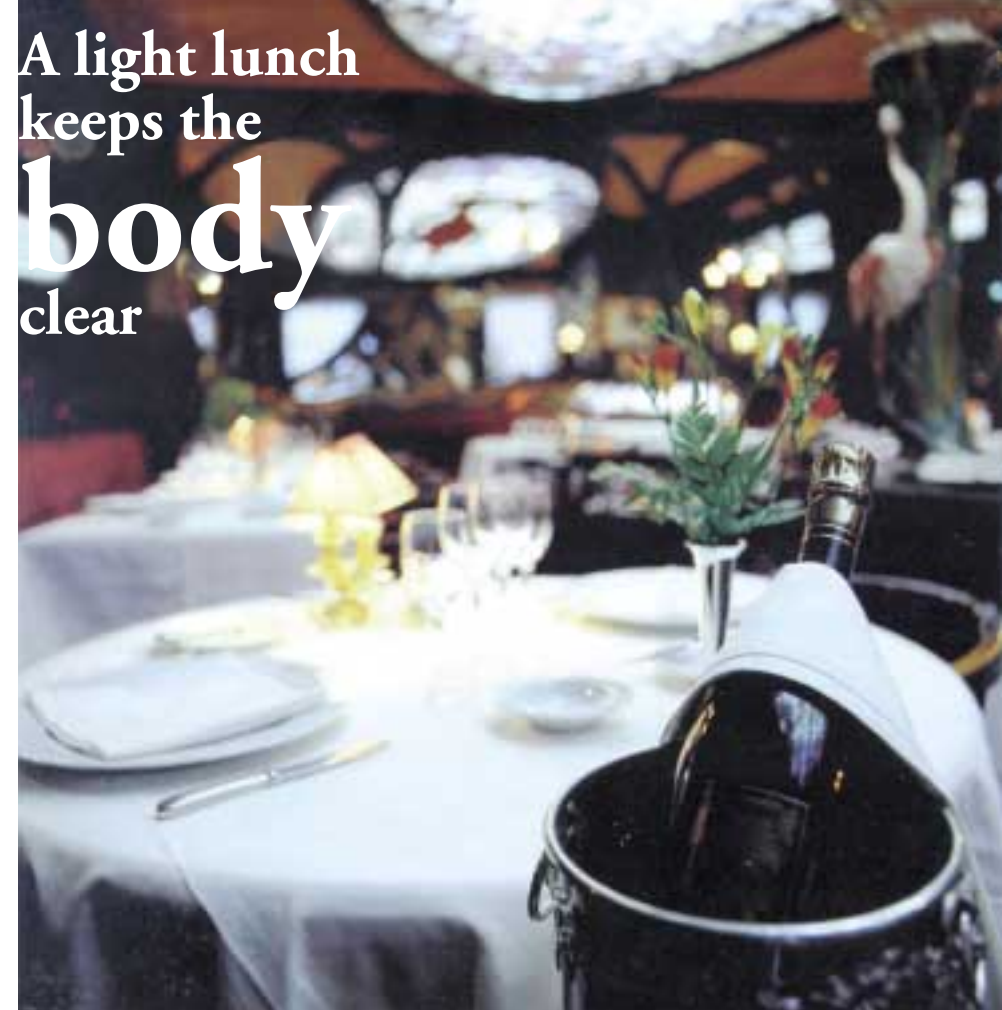
Wild salmon croustade.

Warm oysters in the shell topped with caviar.

Mini lamb skewers with fresh mint.

When served as an aperitif the more robust and powerful Champagnes with **Body** will make you feel like turning these appetizers into a small buffet or a real, if improvised meal.

A light lunch keeps the body clear



When you are sharing a meal to exchange ideas, make new friends or negotiating a contract, you will prefer the sort of savory and inventive ideas that today's restaurants offer to those who work hard in the afternoons. **Champagnes with Body** are vinous, full flavoured. They always please without overpowering.

Menu

Warm foie gras on a bed of wild mushrooms
Green lentil salad with sliced pigeon breast

Cream of cauliflower with diced lobster
Brochette of scallops with curry sauce or Roasted sea bass
Fillet of duck with caramelised onions
Cheese platter including: Comté, Farmhouse Cantal, Tome de Brebis, Maroilles, Epoisses

Lime Soufflé

Frozen coffee and Butterscotch mousse

Red fruit gratin with Champagne sabayon

If you cannot resist a more traditional dessert, combine it with a rounder, smoother, Champagne with **Heart**

A gift with Soul

You don't want to arrive empty-handed at a dinner or party. A **Champagne with Soul**, with its unique background, adds a special quality - soulfulness - to your gesture. Some Champagne Houses and Growers have created beautiful gift boxes and you can design a charming and original way to wrap

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your present in paper or fine tissue.

And remember the bottle should be chilled!

A perfect touch would be to present the bottle with two elegant Champagne flutes or perhaps macaroons, foie gras, oysters or even sushi, depending on your host's personality.

Think about **pink** Champagnes for your most romantic celebrations and **vintage** Champagnes for birthdays and anniversaries.



Everyone has family celebrations, good feelings and good news to share. Gather around with your loved ones, choose a few bottles of **Champagne with Heart**, tender, heartwarming intense and harmonious. Serve them together with an exciting **buffet**. Don't hesitate to be inventive when presenting the food.



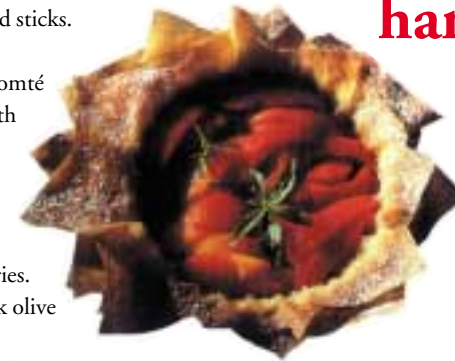
Heartfelt and harmonious

Cherry tomatoes stuffed with fresh herb cheese.
Quail eggs with mayonnaise.
Parma ham on bread sticks.
Lobster terrine.
Triangles of aged Comté cheese sprinkled with thyme.
Baby aubergines stuffed with vegetable mousse.
Cheese puffed pastries.
Courgette and black olive mousse on toast.
Chicken skewers with peanut sauce.
Mini new potatoes stuffed with sour cream & salmon roe.

French beans wrapped in Serrano ham.

Anchovy straws.

Fresh Crab on toasted brioche.



If you are by the seaside a buffet of fish and seafood marries beautifully with the freshness of Champagnes with **Spirit**. If you're in the country, an array of local vegetables and patés will provide an appropriate accompaniment to Champagnes with **Body**.

A major event

It's an important dinner. You've thought of everything, but have

you thought that this could be an extraordinary party? First of all plan to serve not **one** but **many** Champagnes. Welcome your guests with a Champagne with Soul. With the appetizers offer an elegant Champagne with Spirit. With the main course serve a Champagne with Body, and with the dessert turn to a Champagne with Heart. As far as the menu is concerned all you need is a bit of **imagination** to transform a few classic recipes into a simply splendid feast!

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Overture.

Starting with the complexity and the richness provided by a Champagne with **Soul** would surprise your guests. So would hors d'œuvres like canapés of foie gras lightly grilled and seasoned with sea salt and pepper. Quail eggs with tomato, shallots, fresh cream and pepper is another delicious idea.



First act.

A zesty and delightfully light Champagne with **Spirit** lends panache to a platter of grilled crayfish. Or serve them with soft boiled eggs garnished with caviare, truffle purée or thin strips of marinated salmon. Simplicity becomes an art form!



Second act.

The heart of the meal consists of a main course of fish or meat which is beautifully matched with the power and vinosity of a Champagne with **Body**.

Dress up a leg of lamb with a sauce made up of a tablespoonful each of soy sauce, honey, cinnamon, pepper and saffron before roasting it. Baste it a second time half way through cooking. Clothe your fish - which can be sea bass, red snappers, halibut or salmon - in festive paper-

thin slices of potatoes, layer them like scales on the buttered fish, and leave them salted, peppered and chilled for ten minutes, before baking it in a very hot oven.

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Finale.

Accompany the fourth moment of the evening with a fourth Champagne. This time a round and tender Champagne with **Heart** will transform the simplest desserts into a memorable finale. A few suggestions: poach pears for twenty minutes in a mixture of a litre of sugar syrup and the juice of half a lemon. After they have cooled, cut and drain the pears and sauté them with salted butter. Serve them with a good vanilla toffee or gingerbread ice-cream, accompanied with over-warm slices of sponge cake coated with fresh cream.

Develop your Senses

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Sight, smell, taste... discovering the diversity of Champagnes involves all your senses. You can train and tune up your senses - as you do with your muscles - with a little bit of practice.

Here are a **few exercises** to refine your capacity to see, smell and taste. You will soon notice an extra dimension added to the pleasure of tasting Champagnes.

Exercise your sense of sight

1. First learn to observe effervescence: pour different sparkling drinks (mineral waters with different degrees of carbonation, beers, sodas, etc.) into identical, clear glasses set against a white background. All the bubbles are not the same. Their size, their speed, their quantity, the mousse on the surface, all vary from glass to glass.

2. Next, assess the visual quality of each liquid: is it bright, glittering, shiny, or dull?

3. Now look at the colour: pour two or three different fruit syrups (like peach, lemon or apricot) into different glasses of carbonated water, with different degrees of

concentration. Then try to find the most appropriate word to describe the colour in each glass. Later on, when you do this exercise with Champagne, you will discover how much the variation in colour tells you about the personality of each wine.



Stimulate your sense of smell

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1. Try to memorise aromas by exercising for a few moments every day.

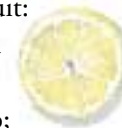
Proceed step by step by choosing one, then two, then several ingredients - according to your timetable and their availability - that you submit to your sense of smell

2. To work! You must learn in succession to smell:

Floral aromas (lime blossom, violet, orange blossom, hawthorn)

Fruity aromas (citrus: lemon, grapefruit; yellow fruit: peach, apricot. Then apples, pears. Exotic fruit: lychees, mango; red fruit: raspberry, strawberry, cherry etc.)

Vegetal aromas (fresh almonds,



Sharpen your sense of taste

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1. Identify flavours:

saltiness, sweetness, acidity, bitterness can be recognised by tasting salt, sugar, lemon juice and unsweetened cocoa.

2. Detect the aromas: put in your mouth the edible ingredients whose scents you can now identify with your eyes closed. Now you can taste



cut grass, mossy underbrush, truffle)

Dried fruit aromas (hazelnuts, raisins, dried figs)

Epicurean aromas (brioche, vanilla, butter, toast, honey, gingerbread, candied fruit)

3. Learn to recognise them with your eyes closed. In a matter of weeks you will notice that your memory of scents has developed to include dozens of aromas.

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their aromas. They travel from the back of the palate to the nose, so you then experience again in the mouth the sensations originally perceived through the nose (a phenomenon known as retro-olfaction) Try this experiment to convince yourself; take a glass of mint syrup and smell it.

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You recognise its smell. Drink it and your tongue will experience a sweet taste followed by the aroma of mint. Try this experiment again while holding your nose; you will notice that only the sweet taste remains.

3. Finish with a 'blind tasting'



Learn to recognise the dominant impression

The sum total of all the sensations creates a final impression on your palate. Normally this falls into one of four categories:

1. Power and intensity: In this case the wine's characteristics are very 'forward' and very physical.



Champagnes with Body fall into this category. To learn how to feel this strength, pay attention to the sensation associated with tasting authentic Swiss cheeses, game, stews, etc.

2. Smoothness. Taste whipped cream or pancake batter. You will experience the same creaminess and mellow quality in Champagnes with Heart.

3. Sprightliness. Create this feeling by squeezing a lemon into lightly carbonated water. This is the dominant characteristic found in a young and fresh wine with good acidity or in the first impression left by Champagnes with Spirit.



4. Complexity. Some wines, Champagnes with Soul amongst them, have so many aromas and tastes that the individual elements cannot be distinguished. A similar experience can be obtained by tasting a rich broth where the flavours of meats, vegetables, spices and aromatics



are intermingled.

Look, taste, smell, differently Your senses evolve the whole time. Take advantage of every opportunity. Proceed at your own rhythm and pace,

according to what your discoveries are. You will find that your perceptions will improve and your vision of Champagne will be transformed.

The pages 'Develop your senses' were carried out with the help of Arlette Buisse of CNAC (the National Council of Culinary Arts).

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The art and the style of tasting Champagne

Choose a bottle of your four favourite Champagnes.

Plunge it into a bucket filled with water and ice for half-an-hour or place it on its side in your refrigerator for four hours.

Find a moment when your palate is **fresh and free** from all other tastes and flavours. The ideal moment is at the end of the morning although the early evening is also an appropriate time.

The exercise requires a **calm** and concentrated atmosphere and is not suited to a noisy crowd.

Pick a **well-lit space** or room but avoid coloured lighting and overly bright or colourful surroundings. Set up the bottle and glasses on a white

tablecloth and look at your glass against a white background.

Prohibit the use of room **freshener**, scented candles, perfumes and tobacco. Their scents would intrude on the tasting.

The ideal tasting is done **'blind'**. The label of the Champagne is covered by wrapping the bottle in cloth or kitchen foil. This avoids preconceptions and everyone's attention will be focused exclusively on the contents of the bottles.

Use identical, **tulip-shaped** glasses that are sufficiently tall to give ample room for the bubbles and the wine's aromas to unfold.

The glasses should previously have been rinsed in **warm**

water and allowed to air dry. Detergents and drying cloths coat the glass and can impede the formation of the Champagne's mousse and bubbles. In most cases, the absence of effervescence is due to the glass. If this happens, simply **change** glasses.

You are now ready to serve each Champagne. Fill the glass **half full** to allow it to breathe.

To help you further in your tasting, take a look at the following **tasting sheet** and use it as a step-by-step guide.

