

Grant HARROLD

THE ROYAL BUTLER



Grant was a Royal Butler and member of the Royal Household of The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall at Highgrove House. He is a Royal etiquette expert and a Royal commentator. He has worked alongside many other Royals, including, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Harry and other VIPs and celebrities over the years.

Grant now runs The Royal School of Etiquette and Butlers with HRH Princess Katarina for whom he also acts as a personal aide. He also features regularly on British television and radio.

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Can you explain the etiquette of serving Champagne in a Royal household?

To serve Champagne in the way a Royal household would serve it is not unlike most grand houses in the United Kingdom. Firstly you do not open the Champagne in the room you will be serving it in. You will either have a preparation area, i.e: your kitchen or if you have one, in the bar. Make sure the Champagne has been chilled correctly in the fridge for at least a few hours so it at a good temperature. When you take the Champagne out of the fridge do this carefully, so not to disturb the Champagne and stand the bottle on a secure worktop. Carefully remove the foil and untwist the wire loop to loosen the wire cage that protects the cork while keeping a thumb on the cork. Now pick

up the bottle and hold the body of the bottle in your left or right hand and wedge the bulbous end of the cork deep into the palm of your other hand. Slowly twist cork back and forward until it is released from the bottle, but do this carefully to make as little noise as possible.

Pre fill a few Champagne glasses with about two inches of Champagne, then top them up to about a few millimetres from the top of the glass. Place the bottle in an ice bucket. You would have no more than five to six glasses per tray. This would then be taken by the butler to the guests. Offering to the most senior ladies first, then the most senior gentleman and so on. You keep topping the glasses up every five minutes until

the end of the event or before the guests go in to a lunch or dinner.

Apart from the Royal family, who's the most memorable person you've served a glass of Champagne to?

A few years ago I was working in a large country house where the guests would take breakfast in the Butlers pantry. I was on duty slightly later than the other Butlers and when I arrived one of the guests was already down for breakfast. While cleaning some silver I got in to a conversation with this person, he commented to me that he recognised me from a TV show I was in at the time. I laughed and told him that I recognised him but I wasn't sure why. He then told me he liked me and laughed, to which I told him I liked him too. The other butler who was on duty was listening to this and called me to our staff room. The Butler asked me if I realised who I was talking to and I of course did not. He said, "Have you heard of Neil Diamond?" I said I know the name and he responded "That's Him!" I then went back in and Neil

Diamond carried on chatting to me, but thankfully I was now aware of who he was. He was an absolute gentleman and even invited me to his concert he was doing in the UK soon after this visit.

Later on that day before lunch I was asked to offer him and of course the other guests that had arrived a glass of Champagne. I served this to him in the garden. I therefore think I could safely say that was without question he is one of the most memorable people I have served Champagne to.

Have you ever served English sparkling wine in the Royal household?

When you are working on events in any household there is a lot of preparation. You are looking after guests from the minute they arrive and until the moment they leave. You don't remember exactly what wine or Champagne you have served in all the receptions that take place over the year. The senior butler will choose along with the host all of the drinks to be offered for the event and as I mentioned earlier there will

then be a team opening and pre pouring the beverage, which will then be offered. When you are topping up the glasses it is rare if a guest would ask to see the bottle, as they are so nervous to ask but when they did ask they always seemed satisfied. Personally I have used sparkling wine on a few occasions on events I have worked on or organised which can be as nice as certain varieties of Champagne. I have been fortunate enough to try very good wines and Champagnes over the years and I am aware that the English sparkling wines are becoming more popular with the British population supporting locally produced products.

Where's the most memorable place you've enjoyed a Glass of Bubbly?

In 2005 I received a phone call from the Master of the Royal Household of HRH The Prince Of Wales. It was to inform me the The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall were inviting me personally to their wedding. This was a huge honour as I had not yet completed one year's service which was required to be able to attend so I was therefore given a personal invitation by them.

The wedding reception was in St Georges Hall at Windsor Castle. I was with other guests which included HM The Queen and other members of the Royal family. While talking to other guests in the Castle, a butler appeared and kindly offered me a glass of Champagne, which I politely accepted.

As you can imagine this was a truly unique event to be invited to and it is something which I will always treasure. After this event we all gathered in the courtyard of Windsor castle to wave goodbye to the Royal couple as they set off for the honeymoon. This was without question for me the most memorable place I have enjoyed a glass of Champagne to date!



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