

# Forbes

## Hats Off To Champagne's Historic Women



If you're a follower of French bubbles, you know that **Bollinger**, the venerable Champagne house, released its "R.D. 2008," the latest vintage of the "Recently Disgorged" this week to the trade (set to arrive stateside later this spring). The process was introduced in 1967 by **Madame Lily Bollinger**, one of France's famous "Champagne widows," who assumed operations of the house upon the death of her husband in 1941. The "R.D." was one of several innovations she introduced, including the first wine made from French "old vines" in two plots that escaped phylloxera. It is said that during the Allied bombings, she slept in the Bollinger cellars. When the war ended, she took charge of rebuilding the estate.



She's known, too, for riding her bike in the Ay countryside to inspect the vineyards, and for her famous quotation, "I drink Champagne when I'm happy and when I'm sad. Sometimes I drink it when I'm alone. When I have company, I consider it obligatory. I trifle with it if I'm not hungry and drink it when I am. Otherwise, I never touch it—unless I'm thirsty."

Madame Bollinger ran the historic house, personally launched its marketing campaign in New York in 1951, and remained at its helm until 1971. Yet, the headline of her [obituary](#) in the New York Times on Feb. 23, 1977 read "Champagne Maker in France, Mrs. Jacques Bollinger, Dead." Despite her accomplishments, the Gray Lady could not even give a first lady of Champagne her own name.

Well, let's do better than that this month, which is dedicated to the achievements of women across the globe. On International Women's Day, here's a hats off to Lily Bollinger and these other historic women of Champagne.