

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with Billecart-Salmon's Mathieu Roland Billecart

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Mathieu Roland Billecart is CEO of Billecart-Salmon

By LISA KLEIN

"Off the Cuff" is a Q&A series from Luxury Daily exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world's best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. This edition features Mathieu Roland Billecart, CEO of French Champagne house [Billecart-Salmon](#).

In this Q&A, Mr. Billecart discusses the value of hard work, the art of waiting and earning the authentic luxury label with care and quality.

Here is the dialogue:

What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?

My first job ever was to work during harvest as a cutter (of the grapes) and then as a wine press worker.

It taught me humility towards nature and the hard work of farming grapes respectfully. It also reminded me that I should go to the gym more often as it was physically very intense!

Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?

Persistence, persistence, persistence.

We are working with nature and that brings its lot of uncertainties every year. Also, when we make our wines we make them between three and 15 years before we can release them from our cellars, so you need to have very strong belief about any strategic decision that you make.

These are not skills, as such, but more personal values and character that make you hold your ground.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

When I was in training in London, my boss used to say, "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

I think it is easy to blame others for what happens when things don't go your way. [Instead], you just need to roll up your sleeves and never give up until you make it happen.

How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think your industry will look like in a decade?

I think the concept of "luxury" has been expanding rather fast, and for some organizations a luxury positioning means just selling at a high price with a fancy packaging. This can be damaging for houses such as ours that offer deeply grounded, authentic, exclusive and top quality wines to the market as potential consumers get confused with dressed up mass-market offerings.

As the industry consolidates, I expect further tiering between the organizations that just offer "pretend" luxury and true luxury players that have the right offering that combines authenticity, exclusivity and top quality that will be able to satisfy the needs of the most demanding clientele.

What recent projects have ignited your passion for working in luxury?

We recently released a revamping of our range centered around four different savoir-faire instead of a more basic and traditional Champagne range. This is the result of six years of teamwork that required many strategic and sometimes difficult decisions all around our ecosystem.

It is great to finally be able to talk about what has kept us busy for so long and demonstrate what luxury means to us. It demonstrates to our community, once again, that we keep challenging ourselves to do always better wines and live by our family motto: "Give priority to quality, strive for excellence".

Who, in any industry or sphere, would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?

We love long lunches at Billecart-Salmon.

In a dream world, I would love to share one with Nicolas-Francois Billecart, my great-great-great-grandfather, who founded our house in 1818, to show him what we are doing with his legacy. Hopefully he would approve.

How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?

At Billecart-Salmon, we are a relatively small family house, so we are a long way from the big corporate world and big meetings or presentations do not happen that often.

However, when we engage with our grower partners or our family about the big decisions that we have to make, I always make sure it is grounded in the long term vision of our house, both by looking at where we come from and where we want to go with our multi-generational vision.

On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?

I like the simple moments, cooking for my family, walking around the golf course and, of course, I am never far from a nice restaurant with a good wine list.

What does luxury mean to you?

True luxury, the vision we apply at Billecart-Salmon, is a blend of authenticity, exclusivity and, of course, superior quality for our Champagne. Most people focus on the result of wanting to be positioned as luxury where, for us, it is all about the efforts to merit that positioning.

Whether a product or service/experience, what is your favourite luxury indulgence?

A lunch on the slope with my family on a sunny day after a morning of skiing would be right up there with a glass of Champagne in hand, of course!