

Sparkling Wines for the Holidays

Wines with bubbles are associated with festivities and celebrations by many people. They are more precious and much more complicated to make than still wines which is probably why they have been reserved for special occasions.

Well, folks, you need to reach outside of the box and make sparklings wines a part of your everyday lives. They are more versatile with their high acidity, more delicate flavors, and their unique palate tingle and lower alcohol content than most table wines and they accompany food very well!

There are awesome sparkling wines coming from all over the world. Of course, Champagne comes from Champagne, France. Early success making sparkling wines came from France which is why "champagne" has become the generic name for sparkling wine. This has caused much aggravation to the resident producers of the Champagne Appellation which has very strict and very exact standards for growing, producing and labeling in all the wine world. Many cheap American brands have copied the Champagne name, but the quality American producers emulate the standards, apply the traditional production methods and leave the Champagne name to the creators! Dom Perignon is probable one of the most famous Champagnes in the world. Dom Perignon was a blind Benedictine monk who made some very significant developments as cellar master at the Abbey of Hautvillers in Epemay. He had the creative idea to harvest selectively, over a period of days rather than all at once so only the ripest fruit would be used. He also was the inventor of the Coquard or "basket" wine press and it was used to make the first "Blanc de Noir". His celebrated remark "I am drinking stars" brought him his fame!

The world is absolutely full of delicious sparkling wines that you should experience! Several French Champagne houses have California sparkling wine operations and they are not second best by any means! In fact, many think the non-vintage California wines may be as good and some better than non-vintage French Champagnes and the price is right! The California sparkling wine wineries are in cooler climates and use the same grapes, primarily pinot noir and chardonnay with some pinot meunier. To give you some idea of quality, try a sparkling wine from Domaine Carneros which is from the house of Taittinger in France and Domaine Chandon is from the house of Moet & Chandon. Also give some good sparkling wines a try that are not from French parentage! S. Anderson, Gloria Ferrer, Iron Horse from California are delightful. Even Francis Coppola makes an unconventional, passionate sparkling wine called Sofia. It's a blend of Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat Cannelli.

It's flavors are rich pear, honeysuckle and exotic passion fruit. You can also get a great Sparkler from Washington State, particularly Domaine St. Michelle Brut and Gruet Brut New Mexico NV, yes from New Mexico! See all the possibilities!!

Now, let's talk about other parts of the world for bubbles to drink! Spain is the largest consumer of sparkling wine in the world! For the reasonable producer, try Paul Cheneau which is rarely over \$10.00. Spanish sparkling wine is called "cava" after the word for cellar and is made in Penedes in northeast Spain. Cavas are made in the French style, called "metodo classico" This means that the second fermentation which produces the bubbles takes place in the bottle. Cavas were traditionally made from the grapes of macabeo, parellada, and xarello, but more wineries are switching over to chardonnay to have a more universal taste profile. Spanish cavas are generally light, crisp and very refreshing. Try a Spanish Sparkling Rose for the Holidays. They are delicious and go very well with Holiday foods.

In Italy, the name to remember is prosecco, a sparkling wine from the grape of the same name in the Veneto region of northeastern Italy. One to experience is Rustico by Nino Franco, it's bone dry with light citrus flavors and a faint taste of almond on the finish. The key to good prosecco is freshness. The other great sparkler from Italy is Moscato d'Asti, a sweet sparkler made in Piedmont in Northeastern Italy. It the ultimate Brunch sparkler!! Try it on Christmas morning or New Years Day for a delightful treat and you don't have to feel guilty about drinking so early because it's low in alcohol content!

Next, travel on over to Australia and try some Seaview Brut Sparkling Wine for around \$10.00. It a blend of pinot noir, muscadelle, chenin blanc and semillon. It's a fine value-priced sparkler to use for everyday bubble-heads.

Now, we're going to go back to France and explore the other areas where more sparlers come from other than Champagne. In the Loire Balley, sparkling Vouvray is made from the chenin blanc grapes. Travel on over to Alsace and try a Cremant d'Alsace made from a combination of pinot noir, pinot blanc and pinot gris. Because of the high acidity, they are crisp, and very refreshing. Lucien Albreche and Mure are two names to remember!

Hopefully, you are going to have some delightful new experiences with bubbles. Just remember that sparkling wines should have a clean aroma, citrus notes, and the tinier the bubbles, the better. Your mouth should feel refreshed and ready for another bite of food and looking forward to another sip of its delightful pleasures! You will soon realize that sparkling wines are special during the holidays, but enrich your life all year long!

Priscilla Livingston
Priscilla's Crystal Coast Wines



Tournament Participants: These representatives of the 18 Hole Ladies group at Bogue Banks Country Club recently competed in a two-day end-of-the-year tournament sponsored by Down East Women's Golf Assn. From left are Rae Jones, Joy Wray, Lib Peele & Janie Briley. On the first day Lib Peele took a second in fourth flight, low grass & Joy took third in low net in their flight.

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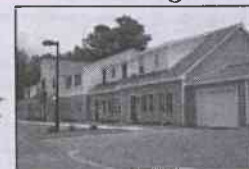
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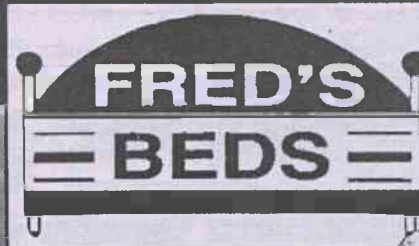
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