



December 2008

Grapevine

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A holiday toast to **Champagne**

Champagne – the wine, not the place – holds for many, an unparalleled mystique and allure. And while most of us are familiar with the big names in Champagne – Veuve Clicquot, Taittinger, Bollinger – far fewer of us have heard of many of the excellent smaller vintners. And for good reason: The big-name Champagne houses have more resources for high-level marketing tactics – consider those seductive magazine ads and flashy websites that market images of effortless style and sophistication – while the smaller names concentrate their far fewer resources into making Champagne.

Keep in mind three things: First, Champagne is wine, sparkling wine as opposed to still wine, wine made according to a specific method that produces those fine, delectable bubbles. Second, to be



*A Champagne extravaganza:
The ultimate way to celebrate the holidays.*

considered Champagne, the grapes must be grown within that specific region of France, located in the northeast, near the Belgian border, and known for its chalky, white soil – a geologic extension of the basin that forms southern England's White Cliffs of Dover. This soil produces wines with notes of clean minerality and subtle fruit.

Third, unless a vintage is specified, Champagne is produced from wines of different vintages – NV for non-vintage.

Sparkling wines like Prosecco from Italy, Cava from Spain, or California sparkling wine are frequently made according to the same method but – while delicious in their own

right – can not be called Champagne because of where the grapes are grown.

Further, there is a notable difference between the grapes used for big-name houses and grower Champagnes: Big names like Veuve Clicquot or Taittinger make wines from grapes grown by various producers throughout the Champagne region, mixing grapes grown in a variety of conditions – soil, elevation, weather, and the actual care given to the grapes by the individual vintners.

Grower Champagne, on the other hand, is made with grapes cultivated by the same people who grow and know those grapes that go into that bottle on your table.

Despite these differences, it would be unjust and inaccurate to say that all big houses make lesser

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What Makes it Sparkle?

Whether celebrating a special occasion or an ordinary day, sometimes there is nothing better than Champagne. But when it's just not possible to splurge, sparkling wines from other parts of the world, including Cava and Prosecco, can be the perfect choice.

Aside from where the grapes are grown, other differences between Champagne and sparkling wine are the variety of grapes and the fermentation process used to produce the bubbles: Champagne is made by



adding yeast and sugar to bottles of still wine and leaving the wine to ferment. After a period of years, the yeast cells are removed from the wine, which is then topped with more wine and sealed with a cork and metal cage. Voila! Champagne.

This method is often used to make Spanish Cava, which is made from indigenous grapes and sells for far less money. The carbon dioxide which creates the bubbles and fizz can come either from the traditional fermentation process or by having carbon dioxide injected into the cask. Prosecco, a variety of white grape grown predominantly in northern Italy, is typically fermented in the cask or a pressurized tank, allowing for a shorter fermentation. So, whether you opt for the splendor of Champagne or the simplicity of sparkling wine - or an all-bubbly evening of both - there are plenty of wonderful choices with which to celebrate.

quality wines than those made by the growers and that all growers make exceptional wines. While there are fabulous big-name and grower wines out there, there are also disappointing wines from both. Liken it to small dairy farmers that make and sell their own artisan cheeses and large companies that mass-produce cheddars that make many people happy on a regular basis. Yet, it makes sense that a certain level of pride and care would go from vine to bottle, even if it means forgoing the image and brand making and notoriety that only the big houses can afford.

That said, why should you - simply in search of a bottle of Champagne to celebrate New Year's Eve, a job promotion, or a beautifully ordinary Wednesday evening with

takeout - care about whether you buy big-name or grower Champagne? Well, because it is no different than buying and trying something else new that you just might like - goat cheese, farm fresh eggs, wild mushrooms. And it's fun, as drinking wine should only ever be. Sparkling wine of any variety is not the domain of an imagined elite, it is a pleasure that can and should be enjoyed by anyone who enjoys wine.

And for those curious about the notion of *terroir* - the confluence of soil, climate, and wine making methods that create a wine's singular personality - grower Champagne is a natural next step. It doesn't have to be the final or only step anymore than buying a wedge of Reggiano Parmagiano on Friday would preclude

buying a bag of thankfully pre-shredded cheddar on Sunday. It's about mixing it up, trying something new, getting to know better your own tastes.

So continue to enjoy Prosecco or Veuve Clicquot, Korbelt Brut or Bollinger, but give yourself and the friends around your dinner table the gift of experiencing this wine's largely unsung, sparkling heroes. May we suggest...

Philippe Prié Brut Champagne (Grower) \$29.99 (reg 34.99) Made mostly from Pinot Noir with 20% Chardonnay, this wine has a floral nose and fruit on the palate.

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin Brut Champagne \$39.99 (reg 49.99) One of the most well-known Champagnes, this Brut is bursting with flavors of

crisp, green apple.
Cantine Maschio Prosecco Brut, Italy \$11.99 This Italian sparkling wine has white peach and orange blossoms on the nose, and lingering flavors of peach and almond. Excellent with seafood or as an aperitif.

Poema Cava, Spain \$10.99 From the Penedes in Spain and made according to the traditional *méthode Champenoise*, this wine is light enough to enjoy on its own but has enough structure to stand up to lighter fare.

Look for
Discovering the
Magic of Port
in the
January 2009
issue of
Grapevine.

Sale Prices & Mail-in Case Rebates

Toasted Head Chardonnay \$131.99 w/ 12 btl disc. (\$10.99 per btl) After \$30 reb — final case cost: \$101.99, final btl cost \$8.50 (reg \$13.99) Save \$66 per case.

Robert Mondavi Private Selection 1.5 L Chardonnay, Cab Sauv, Merlot \$101.99 w/ 6 btl disc. (\$16.99 per btl) After \$20 reb — final case cost \$81.99, final btl cost \$13.66 (reg \$21.99) Save \$66 per case.

Sterling Vintners Collection Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauv Blanc, Zinfandel \$89.99 w/ 12 btl disc. (\$7.49 per btl) After \$36 reb — final case cost \$53.99, final btl cost \$4.49 (reg \$9.99) Save \$66 per case.

Gnarly Head Old Vine Zinfandel - \$89.99 w/ 12 btl disc. (\$7.49 per btl) After \$30.00 reb — final case cost \$59.99, final btl cost \$4.99 (reg 9.99) Save \$66 per case.

Blackstone Merlot \$99.99 w/ 12 btl disc. (\$8.33 per btl) After \$25 reb — final case cost \$74.99, final btl cost \$6.25 (reg 9.99) Save \$45 per case.

Louis Martini Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon \$59.99 w/ 6 btl disc. (\$9.99 per btl) After \$25 reb — final case cost \$34.99, final btl cost \$5.83 (reg 13.49) Save \$45.99 on 6 btl case.

Beringer White Zinfandel 1.5L \$59.99 w/ 6 btl disc. (\$9.99 per btl) After \$15 reb — final case cost \$44.99, final btl cost \$7.49 (reg 13.99) Save \$38.99 per 6 btl case.

"Come, I am tasting the stars!." - Attributed by legend to Dom Perignon (1638-1714)

December Staff Wine Picks

Sheila - Louis Jadot White Burgundy (2006) Chassagne-Montrachet, FR \$41.49 This classic Burgundy walks a high wire of elegance and density. Ripe pear trailed by mineral, spice, and warm hazelnuts; it finishes with a rich, honeyed texture.

Damian - Cloudline Pinot Noir (2006) Oregon \$17.99 (reg 20.99) A beautiful pinot the color of ruby red glass, Cloudline is soft and round, gracing the palate with cherries and red fruit. Like all good things worth waiting for, its underlying earthiness emerges with opening time.

Seaborn - Au bon Climat Pinot Noir (2007) Santa Maria, CA \$23.99 Well balanced with wild strawberry, a hint of spice, and savory notes, this elegant but fruit-forward pinot pairs well with many friends enjoying sublime fare — grilled salmon, roast pork tenderloin, porcini risotto — and uninhibited conversation.

Denise - Moutard Père et Fils Rosé Champagne (NV) Champagne, FR \$33.99 (reg 39.99) A grower Champagne from the Cote des Bar, the limestone-rich soils foster intense, fruit aromas and keen minerality. It is a perfect holiday - or Tuesday or Friday - Champagne.

Ian - Mettler Family Vineyards Old Vine Zinfandel (2006) Lodi, CA \$17.99 Framed with aromas of wild berry and espresso, this rich Zin is balanced by smooth tannins and controlled acidity. Captivating from the first sip, you're left yearning with the last.

Hunter - Storybook Mountain Vineyards Zinfandel (2006) Napa Valley, CA \$36.99 Fearlessly fruit-forward, this Zin has supple balance. Racy and assertive with fruit and green pepper, the finish is tinged with a whisper of chocolate.

W&S'S Top Ten Wines

Chateau Phélan Ségur Bordeaux (2004) Saint-Estèphe, France. \$36.99 (reg 42.99) Black fruit, subtle oak.

Klinker Brick Old Vine Zinfandel (2006) Lodi, CA \$19.99 Bold cherry and berry; spices; smooth finish.

Charles Krug Pinot Noir (2006) - Carneros, Napa Valley \$24.99 Strawberry, black cherry, toasty oak.

Ex-Libris Cab Sauv blend (2006) Columbia Valley, WA \$15.79 (reg 18.99) Cedar and spice aromas; concentrated fruit flavors.

Estancia Reserve Meritage blend (2005) Paso Robles, CA \$19.99 (reg 29.99) Chocolate and black fruit; bold, intense.

Rombauer Chardonnay (2006) Carneros, CA \$27.99 (reg 32.99) Floral, fruity; clean, touch of oak.

J Pinot Gris (2007) Russian River Valley, CA \$21.99 Honeysuckle and pear aromas; good acidity.

Greco di Tufo (2007) Feudi di San Gregorio, Italy \$20.99 Pineapple and vanilla aromas; apricot and caramel flavors.

Chateau Bois-Martin Sauv Blanc/Semillon (2007) Graves, Bordeaux \$17.99 Full-bodied; good w/ mild cheeses.

Legado del Conde Albarino (2007) Rias Baixas, Spain \$15.99 Ripe peach and subtle herbal notes, divinely floral and citrus finish. (*From WS' Top 100*)

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-8 & Sat, 2-6

Fri 12/5: Pinot Noir from Burgundy, CA, Oregon
Taste the similarities of the pinot noir grape and the differences of the regions where they are grown.

Sat 12/6: Spanish Seduction An array of Spanish wines to warm up the holiday season, accompanied by hearty and sultry Spanish cheeses.

Fri 12/12: How About a Menage a Trois? Live dangerously with a threesome of CA reds, whites, and rosés.

Sat 12/13: Taste the Splendor of Organic Wines
Wines from Chile with Novas, Sincerity, and Natura.

Fri 12/19: South African Secret Experience South Africa's rich treasure of sparkling and still wines.

Sat 12/20: A French Fete We'll pour Taittinger Champagnes, Louis Jadot wines, and Café Bohème Liqueur, complimented by Café Bohème mini tiramisu cupcakes.

Tues 12/23: A Toast to Tradition The perfect wines for your traditional holiday dinner and last-minute gifts.

Fri 12/26: To the Magnificent 90s Taste the difference with these exceptional wines rated 90+ points.

Sat 12/27: Grower Champagnes See for yourself what all the fuss is about when W&SS proudly pours a stunning selection of grower Champagnes.

Wed 12/31: A Holiday Toast to More Champagne Ring in the New Year with a special Champagne tasting when we pour Dom Perignon, Moët & Chandon, and Chandon from California.

Celebrate with Festive Holiday Cocktails

Champagne Poinsetta:

Korbel California Champagne

1/4 oz triple sec

Splash of pomegranate liqueur

Put triple sec and pomegranate liqueur into a Champagne flute and top with Korbel.



Christmas Silk Stocking:

2 1/2 oz Ketel Vodka

3/4 oz Chambord

1/2 oz fresh lime juice

1 1/2 oz sweetened lemon juice

3 oz brut Champagne

Lemon twist for garnish

Pour all but Champagne and lemon twist into chilled glass, shake vigorously; strain into chilled flute, fill with Champagne and garnish with lemon twist.

Check out Our Ongoing Store Specials

Case discounts — 12 bottles: 15%; six bottles: 10%

Pink pricing — 15% discount on select bottles

Two for Tuesday — 25% off

Mix & Match — Three for \$24.99 on select bottles

The 90s Club — Wines rated 90+ Pts for under \$20

Wine & Spirits offers year-round custom made gift baskets and a variety of wine bar gifts and accessories: Riedel glasses, foil cutters, corkscrews, decanters, wine stoppers, and wine bags — including Green Sleeves by Leah.

90s Club (90+ points, under \$20)

MontGras Reserva Carmenere (2007) Colchagua Valley, Chile \$9.99 Spice, vanilla, toast; soft tannins. 90 (WE)

Veramonte Primus Carmenere/Cab Sauv/Merlot (2005) Casablanca Valley, Chile \$19.99/\$16.99 Bold fruit, exotic spice; elegant finish. 92 (W&S)

Beaulieu Vineyard Cab Sauv (2005) Napa Valley, CA \$13.99 Cherry, plum, chocolate; smooth finish. 90 (WE)

Dashe Zinfandel (2006) Dry Creek Valley, CA \$19.99 (reg 22.49) Black cherry, spice; velvety tannins. 90 (RP)

Fetish – The Watcher Shiraz (2006) Barossa Valley, AUS \$18.99 (reg 21.99) Cherry, spice, smoke; fruity finish. 91 (WS)

Bethy's Baskets & Wine Kits

Let W&SS ease your shopping to-do list with custom gift baskets and wine kits. **Custom Gift Baskets** come in a variety of sizes. Or simply ask for Rudolph's Reds: Pillar Box Red 2006 – aromas of cassia and black raspberry, 91 Pts (WA) and Tin Roof Cellars Merlot 2005 – black cherry, spice, and chocolate, 90 Pts (WE), for \$24.99. Stop in on Saturday 12/13 to see W&SS' Bethy doing basket demonstrations.

Wine Kits: Bethy and W&SS will put together two select wines, a foil cutter, corkscrew, and wine charms. The perfect holiday gift.



Bethy's 'Rudolph's Reds' holiday gift basket — \$24.99

*Free local delivery for \$50+ within 5-mile radius of W&SS.

*Sign up for our e-mail list and receive a complimentary bottle of wine for your birthday.