

Wine Spectator

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Sparkling Wine Values From Around the World

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Issue: December 31, 2014

All Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne, from the famous region in France. Vintners around the world try their hand at sparkling wine production, and their offerings add a great diversity of flavors, styles and textures to the category. Some follow Champagne's lead, basing their wines on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Others use grapes local to their region, such as the Glera grape in Prosecco, or Lambrusco in red sparkling wine from Italy's Emilia-Romagna. Many can be found at affordable prices, including these selections from the Old World and New, all available for \$25 or less per bottle.

The biggest dividing line in the sparkling category is the production technique used to create the bubbles during the secondary fermentation. In Champagne's traditional method, the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle that will later reach the consumer—a process that can be both labor-intensive and expensive. The alternative is the Charmat, or transfer, method, wherein a large quantity of wine is put under pressure during its second fermentation, and the resulting sparkling wine is then bottled.

A sparkler's sweetness level is another factor that comes into play with greater frequency when considering bubbly outside the borders of Champagne. Unlike most still wine, sparkling wine production generally involves the addition of a small amount of sugar, known as the *dosage*, prior to the final closure of the bottle. The level of sweetness in the bottle depends on the amount of *dosage*. Look to the labels for guidance: Nature or extra brut are the driest; brut, the most common indicator, is dry; and extra dry or dry (often sec or secco on French and Italian bottlings) indicate lightly to frankly sweet wines.

CALIFORNIA

- 91 **MUMM NAPA** Brut Napa Valley Prestige NV | \$22
- 90 **GLORIA FERRER** Brut Sonoma County Sonoma NV | \$22
- 90 **ROEDERER ESTATE** Brut Anderson Valley NV | \$24
- 89 **GLORIA FERRER** Blanc de Blancs Carneros NV | \$22
- 89 **SCHARFFENBERGER** Brut Rosé Mendocino County Excellence NV | \$23
- 89 **LAETITIA** Brut Arroyo Grande Valley Cuvée NV | \$25
- 88 **SCHARFFENBERGER** Brut Mendocino County Excellence NV | \$20
- 88 **DOMAINE CHANDON** Blanc de Noirs California NV | \$22
- 88 **GLORIA FERRER** Blanc de Noirs Carneros NV | \$22
- 88 **MUMM NAPA** Brut Rosé Napa Valley NV | \$24
- 87 **PIPER SONOMA** Brut Sonoma County Select Cuvée NV | \$18
- 87 **ROCK WALL** Grenache Rosé Yolo County 2013 | \$22

NON-VINTAGE VERSUS VINTAGE

Almost all still wine is vintage-specific, but most sparkling wine is non-vintage, blending wine produced from grapes



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harvested during two or more vintages. Ideally, this supports a consistent house style from year to year—a historic holdover from a time when it was more common to suffer several lesser-quality vintages in a row. During this era, vintage-dated bottlings of sparkling wine were only produced from the very best years, in order to capture the distinctive character of an outstanding vintage. Vintage-dated sparklers are now possible in most years, thanks to modern viticulture and vinification, as well as better growing conditions, but they are still sought after for the unique nature of the wine.

FRANCE

- 91 **JEAN BOURDY** Brut Crémant du Jura NV | \$25
- 89 **LORELIN LABORDE** Brut Crémant du Jura Les Granges Paquenesses NV | \$23
- 89 **ANDRÉ & MIREILLE TISSOT** Extra Brut Crémant du Jura NV | \$24
- 88 **BENOIT GAUTIER** Brut Vouvray Antique NV | \$20
- 88 **CATHERINE & PIERRE BRETON** Brut Vouvray La Dilettante NV | \$23
- 88 **DOMAINE BADOZ** Brut Crémant du Jura NV | \$25
- 87 **ST.-HILAIRE** Brut Blanquette de Limoux 2011 | \$13
- 87 **MICHÈLE CAPDEPON** Brut Blanquette de Limoux NV | \$16
- 87 **KIENTZHEIM-KAYSERSBERG** Brut Blanc de Blancs Crémant d'Alsace Anne de K NV | \$20
- 87 **LUCIEN ALBRECH** Brut Crémant d'Alsace NV | \$22
- 86 **BOUVET** Brut Vin de Table de France Signature NV | \$15
- 86 **ALSACE WILLM** Brut Rosé Crémant d'Alsace NV | \$17

SPARKLERS AND FOOD

Although sparkling wines are most commonly drunk on their own as aperitifs or celebratory toasts, their range of styles makes them excellent accompaniments to a wide variety of dishes. Extra brut or brut nature sparklers make crisp matches with lighter seafood dishes. Full-bodied bruts, especially blancs de noirs (made exclusively from red grapes) can pair with poultry and pork. Sweeter versions go nicely with fruit- and pastry-based desserts. Adventurous diners can pair an entire menu with diverse sparklers.

ITALY

- 89 **FIORINI** Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro Becco Rosso 2013 | \$17
- 89 **TENUTA PEDERZANA** Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro Il Grasparossa della Tradizione 2012 | \$22
- 88 **ROTARI** Brut Trento NV | \$14
- 88 **VIETTI** Moscato d'Asti Cascinetta Vietti 2012 | \$15
- 88 **CLETO CHIARLI E FIGLI** Secco Lambrusco di Sorbara del Fondatore 2013 | \$17
- 88 **G.D. VAJRA** Moscato d'Asti 2012 | \$18
- 88 **PICCINI** Extra Dry Prosecco NV | \$16
- 86 **PUIANELLO** Lambrusco Reggiano Amabile Primabolla NV | \$11
- 86 **CARLETTO** Extra Dry Prosecco Treviso NV | \$12
- 86 **CASA DEI FAVERI** Extra Dry Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore NV | \$13
- 86 **MIONETTO** Brut Prosecco Treviso Prestige Collection NV | \$14
- 85 **GANCIA** Moscato d'Asti 2012 | \$14 SPAIN
- 88 **EL CEP** Brut Cava Marques de Gelida Ecológic Reserva 2010 | \$20
- 88 **CODORNÍU** Brut Pinot Noir Cava Gran Codorníu 2011 | \$20
- 87 **SADEVE** Brut Rosé Cava Naveran 2012 | \$16
- 86 **EL CEP** Brut Cava Kila 2011 | \$14
- 86 **SEGURA VIUDAS** Brut Pinot Noir Cava Aria NV | \$14
- 86 **MONT-FERRANT** Brut Cava Reserva 2008 | \$15
- 86 **PERE VENTURA** Brut Cava Tresor Reserva NV | \$15
- 85 **CLOS AMADOR** Brut Cava Delicat NV | \$10
- 85 **SEGURA VIUDAS** Brut Rosé Cava NV | \$10
- 85 **VICENTE GANDÍA** Brut Cava Hoya de Cadenas NV | \$13
- 85 **JOSEP MASACHS** Brut Nature Cava Mas Fi Reserva NV | \$13
- 85 **FREIXENET** Brut Nature Cava Reserva 2009 | \$14

OTHER

- 89 **CHATEAU FRANK** Brut Finger Lakes 2007 | \$25
- 88 **DOMAINE STE. MICHELLE** Extra Dry Columbia Valley Michelle NV | \$14

- 88 **GRAHAM BECK** Brut Rosé Western Cape 2009 | \$20
- 87 **DOMAINE STE. MICHELLE** Brut Columbia Valley Michelle NV | \$14
- 87 **GREG NORMAN ESTATES** Sparkling South Eastern Australia NV | \$15
- 87 **PARINGA** Sparkling Shiraz South Australia 2012 | \$18
- 87 **CHATEAU FRANK** Riesling Finger Lakes Crémant Célèbre NV | \$21
- 86 **DE BORTOLI** Emeri Crisp White South Eastern Australia NV | \$12
- 86 **GRAHAM BECK** Brut Rosé Western Cape NV | \$17
- 86 **KIR-YIANNI** Sec Rosé Amyndeon Akakies 2012 | \$20
- 85 **DOMAINE STE. MICHELLE** Brut Rosé Columbia Valley Michelle NV | \$14

TRADITIONAL VERSUS TRANSFER

Purists argue that the traditional method imparts greater textural finesse, but most wine drinkers would be hard-pressed to identify traditional versus transfer based on texture alone. Bottlings made via the traditional method often feature a small, refined bubble, but those made via Charmat frequently seem more creamy on the palate. Many producers, particularly those in New World regions, can legally use either technique, and those employing the traditional method will often label their wines with the phrase "*méthode traditionnelle*" or "*méthode Champenoise*." But in some regions, in order for a wine to be able to carry an appellation name on the label, only one method of production is permitted.

TRADITIONAL

FRANCE Blanquette de Limoux, from the Languedoc, and any regional wines labeled "crémant"

ITALY Franciacorta, from Lombardy, and Trento, from Trentino-Alto Adige

SPAIN Cava

TRANSFER

ITALY Prosecco, from the northeast, and Moscato d'Asti, from Piedmont