

Wine Spectator

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SPARKLING

PERSONALITIES

We recommend 100 bubblyies from around the world that bring a sense of celebration to any occasion from picnics to parties

BY ALISON NAPJUS



The lawn at Tasmanian sparkling house Clover Hill

Wine drinkers have come to love the soft sigh or emphatic ‘pop!’ of a sparkler to accompany meals and elevate occasions large and small throughout the year. And just as the world of still wine production has expanded in recent years, so has that of sparkling wine, with flavors and styles coming from regions across the globe.

In the past year, *Wine Spectator* editors have blind-tasted nearly

400 new releases of sparkling wines. In total, our tasters reviewed bubblyies from 19 distinct wine regions or countries, bottlings from Champagne, of course, as well as examples from other more traditional areas such as Italy and California, but also versions from New Zealand, South Africa, Israel and more. As a whole, it’s a diverse group, reflecting different production methods, grape varieties and aging regimens. In this story, a concise guide to global bubblyies, we explore and contrast some of the highlights.

FRANCE

CHAMPAGNE AND MORE FROM THE HOME OF SPARKLING WINE

A glass of Champagne continues to be many wine drinkers' celebratory beverage of choice, while it has also found a place, often paired with food, in more everyday moments. With its long history and premier status, Champagne is emulated by many sparkling wine producers in regions around the world.

Legally, four main points separate true Champagne from other sparklers. It must be made in the Champagne region of France. It must be made from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Meunier grapes (although limited quantities of local, little-known varieties are also allowed in some instances). It must follow the production process known as *méthode traditionnelle*, wherein the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle later sold to the consumer. And it must follow the region's aging guidelines: at least 15 months for non-vintage bottlings and three years for vintage-dated versions.

These regulations and their impact on



Traditional farming practices at Domaine Huet in the Loire Valley

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES FROM FRANCE

WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews using the online Wine Ratings search.

96	MOËT & CHANDON Brut Champagne Dom Pérignon 2013	\$250
96	TAITTINGER Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Comtes de Champagne 2012	\$204
95	KRUG Brut Champagne Grande Cuvée 170ème Édition NV	\$210
95	LAURENT-PERRIER Brut Champagne Grand Siècle Grande Cuvée N°25 NV	\$250
95	VEUVE CLICQUOT Brut Champagne La Grande Dame 2015	\$210
94	LOUIS ROEDERER Brut Nature Rosé Champagne Starck 2015	\$105
94	RUINART Brut Rosé Champagne NV	\$92
94	VILMART Brut Champagne Grand Cellier NV	\$77
93	JOSÉ DHONDT Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne NV	\$54
93	GOSSET Brut Champagne Grande Réserve NV	\$60
93	ALFRED GRATIEN Brut Champagne NV	\$60
92	CHARTOGNE-TAILLET Brut Champagne Cuvée Ste.-Anne NV	\$56

92	NICOLAS FEUILLATTE Brut Champagne Réserve Exclusive NV	\$39
92	MOËT & CHANDON Brut Champagne Impérial NV	\$48
91	L. AUBRY FILS Brut Champagne NV	\$46
91	DEUTZ Brut Champagne Classic NV	\$60
91	GONET-MÉDEVILLE Brut Champagne Tradition NV	\$47
91	HENRIOT Brut Champagne Souverain NV	\$55
91	JEEPER Brut Champagne Grand Assemblage NV	\$56
91	ALAIN VOGÉ St.-Péray Les Bulles d'Alain 2017	\$48
90	GASTON CHIQUET Brut Champagne Tradition NV	\$44
90	LE ROCHER DES VIOLETTES Montlouis Sur Loire Pétillant Naturel 2019	\$27
89	DOMAINE HUET Brut Vouvray 2017	\$30
89	VEUVE AMBAL Brut Crémant de Bourgogne Grande Cuvée NV	\$20
88	VEUVE AMBAL Brut Rosé Crémant de Bourgogne Grande Cuvée NV	\$20

winemaking, as well as Champagne's northerly climate and its soils of chalk and clay, result in minerally, mouthwatering bubbly known for a fine, creamy texture, with primary flavors of stone fruit, berries, cherries and citrus. The production protocols—particularly the aging requirements—also add to the final price tag. Champagne is typically the most expensive of all sparklers, with many bottles priced at \$100 or more. Values go from \$40 to \$60 for non-vintage bottlings and \$60 to \$80 for vintage-dated wines.

Elsewhere in France, greater value can be found, more often in the \$25 to \$50 range. Many French sparklers outside of the Champagne region are labeled simply as Crémant, or with an appellation designation specific to the region. They typically utilize the dominant grape variety of the area of origin, shifting the flavor profile and character from that of a Champagne in a pleasing way that helps to differentiate them. Although there's a stylistic range, in general I find these bottlings to be lighter and crisper than Champagne; they're expressive and flavorful while staying within a light-on-its-feet, aperitif style.



The cellars of Burgundy-based Veuve Ambal



Champagne Louis Roederer *chef de cave* Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon (left) and owner Frédéric Rouzaud, with designer Philippe Starck

BOTTOM: ENZO ORLANDO; TOP: JULIEN PIFFAUT

UNITED STATES

QUALITY AND VALUE UP AND DOWN THE WEST COAST



Raising a glass at Iron Horse's Sonoma winery

California, Oregon and Washington produce the majority of quality U.S. sparklers, relying on a core of historic estates that mostly use Champagne as their model. But there's also a growing trend of well-priced, easy-drinking versions, bottles or cans to open any time your life needs a little effervescence.

Washington has long been reliable for wallet-friendly bubbly. Leading producers such as Domaine Ste. Michelle utilize *méthode traditionnelle*, while keeping costs down by sourcing widely for the best fruit, without adhering to the traditional Champagne blend. Korbel, in California, is another longtime source of affordable sparklers made in the traditional method, in

this case, in fact, based on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. In recent years, many California houses have emerged as makers of extreme-value bubbly. Their labels and packaging can be as irreverent as the blends within, and though not the most complex or ageworthy examples, they are refreshing and easy to enjoy.

For more serious bubbly, you should look to established wineries in California and Oregon. Many of the top California estates were founded by Champagne houses. They employ *méthode traditionnelle* to create wines from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grown in the state's warmer, more stable conditions. The resulting wines show a lush creaminess, while still being fresh and balanced, with expressive fruit character and hints of spices and brioche. Comparatively, Oregon's cooler climate ensures more linear drive and a firmer spine of acidity to carry white fruit, spice and mineral flavors. Although many examples from both states are priced between \$20 and \$40, top bottlings command higher prices for their complexity, often upward of \$100.

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES FROM THE U.S.

WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews using the online Wine Ratings search.

94 IRON HORSE Wedding Cuvée Green Valley of Russian River Valley 2018	\$56	89 KING ESTATE Brut Willamette Valley Cuvée 2018	\$40
94 SCHRAMSBERG J. Schram Blancs North Coast 2013	\$130	89 SOKOL BLOSSER Brut Willamette Valley Bluebird Cuvée 2020	\$36
93 ARGYLE Blanc de Blancs Willamette Valley Vintage 2019	\$30	89 SPARKLING POINTE Brut Rosé North Fork of Long Island Topaz Impérial 2019	\$44
93 IRON HORSE Brut Green Valley of Russian River Valley Classic Vintage 2018	\$56	89 ULTRAVIOLET Mouthy Last Dance California 2021	\$24
92 ARGYLE Brut Willamette Valley Vintage 2018	\$30	88 LIEB CELLARS Brut Pinot Blanc North Fork of Long Island 2019	\$30
92 J Cuvée 20 Russian River Valley NV	\$40	87 DOMAINE STE. MICHELLE Brut Rosé Columbia Valley NV	\$13
92 ROCO Brut Willamette Valley RMS 2018	\$65	87 GLORIA FERRER Rosé Blanc de Noirs Carneros NV	\$25
92 ROEDERER ESTATE Brut Rosé Anderson Valley NV	\$38	87 KORBEL Brut Rosé California NV	\$15
92 SCHRAMSBERG Brut Blanc de Blancs North Coast 2019	\$42	85 GROOVE Rosé Sparkling California Kindred Spirit 2020 (250ml)	\$7
91 J Brut Rosé Russian River Valley NV	\$50	85 SIPWELL WINE CO. White Sparkling Paso Robles Tiny Victories 2021 (250ml)	\$7
91 LYTLE-BARNETT Brut Blanc de Noirs Eola-Amity Hills 2018	\$75	85 WEST + WILDER Sparkling White American NV (3/250ml)	\$18
90 PAULA KORNELL Blanc de Noirs Napa Valley 2019	\$50		
89 DOMAINE STE. MICHELLE Brut Columbia Valley NV	\$13		
89 J California Cuvée California NV	\$27		

ITALY

A DIVERSE RANGE OF FLAVORS AND STYLES TO SATISFY ANY PALATE

Prosecco is Italy's sparkling wine star, widely known and appreciated for its accessible style and pricing. But sparkling wine is made throughout the country, with many delicious versions labeled simply as *vino spumante*. And beyond Prosecco, three regions stand out for quality Italian bubbly: northern Italy's Trento DOC and Franciacorta DOCG,

along with Lambrusco, from central Italy's Emilia-Romagna region.

Introductory Prosecco is softly creamy and very drinkable, made from the native Glera grape for white Prosecco or Glera with Pinot Nero for the rosé. Production utilizes the Charmat method, with secondary fermentation taking place in large, pressurized tanks. Prosecco is known for its pretty peach, strawberry and floral notes

and citrusy acidity, as well as for its wallet-friendly prices, typically \$20 or less. For versions with more structure and greater complexity, look to bottlings labeled with the town names at the region's historic center: Valdobbiadene and/or Conegliano. Though generally more expensive, these versions still tend to clock in at \$40 or less.

To the west of Prosecco, the vineyards for northern Italy's Trento DOC wines sit



Lambrusco estate Tenuta Pederzana in Emilia-Romagna

on the mountainous slopes of the Trentino–Alto Adige region. The resulting wines’ profile and firm acidic backbone often echoes the verticality of their origin. The best examples are statuesque, with a rich range of flavors in a style reminiscent of Champagne. They blend Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, as well as Pinot Bianco, and like Champagne, they’re made using *méthode traditionnelle*. Minimum aging requirements begin at 15 months for non-vintage bottlings, and up to a minimum of 36 months for vintage-dated *riservas*. Franciacorta also mimics Champagne’s model. Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, with smaller quantities of Pinot Bianco and the local Erbatmat grape, are blended as a sparkling wine using *méthode traditionnelle*. Minimum aging begins at 18 months, with as much as a 60-month minimum for Franciacorta vintage-dated *riservas*.

Wines from Trento, Franciacorta and Champagne are separate sparklers, yet there are similarities that will guide a Champagne lover to these two Italian bubbles. Trento DOC bottlings are structurally reminiscent of Champagne, often echoing some of Champagne’s mineral character. Many Franciacortas show the textural finesse of Champagne, but there’s a sunny ripeness to the flavor range, buoyed by bright acidity, that’s more Mediterra-



Harvest at Franciacorta producer Majolini

nean in style than examples from Trento or Champagne. Pricing for Trento and Franciacorta start at about \$30 per bottle, with the majority under the \$100 mark.

Lambrusco is one of the wine world’s most distinctive bubbliies. They sit apart for their color—most are a deep, purply red, although some are made as dark rosés. And as their color suggests, they share red wine’s tannic structure and a flavor profile that marries savory characteristics, such as

smoke, herbs and spices, with fruit-forward berry and cherry notes. Lambrusco is both the wine name and the grape, a generic reference to a group of related Lambrusco grape varieties—each with its own, usually long, Italian name. Most Lambrusco today is dry (a sweeter style was more popular in the past). And most Lambrusco is produced using the Charmat method, which helps to keep prices affordable, generally \$25 or less per bottle.

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES FROM ITALY

WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews using the online Wine Ratings search.

93	CA' DEL BOSCO Extra Brut Rosé Franciacorta Annamaria Clementi Riserva 2013	\$135	90	ROTARI Brut Rosé Trento 2016	\$24
93	FERRARI Extra Brut Trento Giulio Ferrari Riserva del Fondatore 2009	\$180	90	VILLA SANDI Brut Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze La Rivetta 2021	\$49
92	GUIDO BERLUCCHI Extra Brut Franciacorta Palazzo Lana Extrême Riserva 2010	\$110	89	RUGGERI & C. Brut Prosecco Treviso Argeo NV	\$15
91	NINO FRANCO Brut Vino Spumante Grave di Stecca 2016	\$54	89	RUGGERI & C. Brut Rosé Prosecco Treviso Argeo 2021	\$15
91	MAJOLINI Brut Franciacorta 2018	\$47	89	VILLA DI CORLO Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro 2021	\$15
90	BELLAVISTA Brut Franciacorta Alma Gran Cuvée NV	\$35	88	BORTOLOTTI Brut Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore NV	\$17
90	GUIDO BERLUCCHI Extra Brut Franciacorta '61 NV	\$36	88	BRANCHER Extra Dry Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore 2021	\$19
90	DESIDERIO BISOL & FIGLI Dry Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze 2022	\$56	88	CESARINI SFORZA Brut Trento NV	\$28
90	BORTOLOTTI Dry Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze U. Bortolotti NV	\$28	88	CONTADI CASTALDI Brut Franciacorta NV	\$25
90	MASOTTINA Extra Dry Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore RDO Rive di Ogliano 2021	\$35	88	LA GIOIOSA & AMOROSA Brut Prosecco Treviso NV	\$15
90	MIONETTO Brut Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore NV	\$20	88	MIONETTO Brut Prosecco Treviso NV	\$15
90	TENUTA PEDERZANA Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro Il Grasparossa della Tradizione 2021	\$22	88	TENUTA PEDERZANA Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro Gibe 2021	\$17
			87	ZONIN Extra Dry Prosecco NV	\$11

COURTESY OF MAJOLINI

OTHER INTERNATIONAL

FROM SPAIN TO AUSTRALIA,
BUBBLIES FROM OUTSIDE THE BOX
DESERVE EXPLORATION

Winemakers around the world are drawn to the challenge of making good bottles of bubbly. They enjoy exploring the potential of a local grape and/or their specific climate and *terroir* through the lens of a sparkling wine.

With some categories, such as Cava and other Spanish sparkling wine, there's a 100-plus-year history and tradition. But for others, such as Tasmania, an island south of Australia, sparkling wine production is a relatively new experiment. House of Arras owner Ed Carr founded his winery fewer than 30 years ago, in 1995. Today, other winemakers are following Carr's lead as Tasmania's cool-weather conditions are increasingly attractive amid climate change.

This diversity is a boon for lovers of bubbly. For those who are willing to look beyond the world's most famous sparkling wine regions there are many fine examples, in a variety of styles and at various price points, just waiting to be discovered.



Riddling bottles of Cava in the cellars of Juvé y Camps

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews using the online Wine Ratings search.

93	HOUSE OF ARRAS Blanc de Blancs Tasmania 2014 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$130	90	TORELLÓ LLOPART Brut Nature Vino Espumoso Corpinnat Tradicional 2015 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$29
93	JOSEP MARIA RAVENTÓS I BLANC Brut Nature Vino Espumoso Manuel Raventós Negra 2015 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$98	89	INNOCENT BYSTANDER Moscato Victoria 2021 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$15
92	CLOVER HILL Brut Tasmania 2016 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$30	89	AGUSTÍ TORELLÓ Brut Cava Mata Reserva 2018 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$23
92	JUVÉ Y CAMPS Brut Cava Gran Reserva 2016 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$60	88	BEST'S Sparkling Shiraz Great Western 2018 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$35
92	MCBRIDE SISTERS COLLECTION Brut Rosé Hawke's Bay NV (<i>New Zealand</i>)	\$25	88	MARQUÉS DE CÁCERES Brut Cava NV (<i>Spain</i>)	\$15
91	GOLAN HEIGHTS WINERY Brut Nature Blanc de Blancs Galilee Yarden Katzrin Late Disgorged 2009 (<i>Israel</i>)	\$300	88	HERETAT MESTRES Brut Cava 1312 Reserva 2019 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$20
91	MOVIA Brut Nature Slovenia Puro 2017 (<i>Slovenia</i>)	\$39	88	MT YENGO Blanc de Blanc Adelaide Hills 2021 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$22
91	JOSEP MARIA RAVENTÓS I BLANC Brut Blanc de Blancs Vino Espumoso 2020 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$23	88	NO.1 FAMILY ESTATE Brut Marlborough No.1 Assemblé NV (<i>New Zealand</i>)	\$33
90	GRAMONA Brut Vino Espumoso Corpinnat Imperial 2017 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$42	88	PARINGA Sparkling Shiraz South Australia 2020 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$18
90	JANSZ Rosé Tasmania Vintage Pipers River 2018 (<i>Australia</i>)	\$58	88	TORELLÓ LLOPART Brut Vino Espumoso Corpinnat Special Edition Reserva 2016 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$21
90	BODEGAS MUGA Brut Cava Conde de Haro Reserva 2019 (<i>Spain</i>)	\$30	87	BACKSBERG Brut Coastal Region Kosher 2019 (<i>South Africa</i>)	\$25
90	NO.1 FAMILY ESTATE Blanc de Blanc Marlborough No.1 Cuvée NV (<i>New Zealand</i>)	\$38	87	CODORNÍU Brut Cava Limited Edition Reserva NV (<i>Spain</i>)	\$13
			85	BODEGAS FAUSTINO Brut Cava Reserva Art Collection NV (<i>Spain</i>)	\$16