

# YEAR'S BEST SUMMER SPARKLERS

Our blind panels tasted 472 new-release sparkling wines from outside of Champagne over the past 12 months. Our critics rated 20 as exceptional (90+) and 22 as Best Buys. **Joshua Greene** reviewed the wines from California, Italy and Spain; **Patrick J. Coninsky** reviewed the wines from New York and **Tara Q. Thomas** reviewed the wines from Austria, France, Germany and Greece. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

## CALIFORNIA

**94 | Iron Horse** \$89  
**2004 Green Valley of Russian River Valley Brut LD** This is David Munksgard's top selection from the Sterling family's estate, disgorged after eight years on the lees. An equal blend of chardonnay (lending apple-skin crispness) and pinot noir (providing bass notes and flavor depth), this wine starts from a tight place and finishes with brisk richness. In between, the flavors have resonance, from delicate high notes of spice and fresh cream to darker tones of minerals, baked apple and caramel. The lasting impression is elegant, clean and lively. (W&S 12/13; 250 cases) *Iron Horse Vineyards, Sebastopol, CA*

**92 | Iron Horse** \$40  
**2008 Green Valley of Russian River Valley Russian Cuvée** Enriched by a higher dosage than the Classic Vintage, this wine has plenty of pink grapefruit zest acidity to completely balance that sweetness and come across as broad and nutty. There's a pale cucumber and apple crispness to the flavor, delicious on its own or with a clambake. (W&S 12/13) *Iron Horse Vineyards, Sebastopol, CA*

**92 | Iron Horse** \$38  
**2008 Green Valley of Russian River Valley Classic Vintage Brut** Pale and creamy with the scent of a pear just coming into ripeness, this is a clean sparkler with flavor development in the matrix of fruit and lees. The flavors last, ready for oysters. (W&S 12/13; 2,300 cases) *Iron Horse Vyd., Sebastopol, CA*

**92 | Roederer Estate** \$47  
**2004 Anderson Valley L'Ermitage Brut** A selection of grapes from Roederer's estate vineyards, this includes four percent barrel-aged reserve wine from the 2000 harvest. While chardonnay outweighs pinot noir (52 percent to 48), the flavors are more in the red-fruit realm, with the fragrance of fresh raspberries. The wine's yeasty maturity measures that fruit into an enticing aroma, while the citrus underpinning of chardonnay lengthens the flavor, keeping the structure tight

and fine. A light, crisp vintage, this would be delicious with poached salmon for brunch. (W&S 12/13) *Roederer Estate, Philo, CA*

**91 | Schramsberg** \$140  
**2005 North Coast J. Schram Vintage Rosé** Keith Hock and Hugh Davies blend this wine from selected lots focused on vineyards in Carneros (including Hyde and Hudson), Mendocino (Husch), the Sonoma Coast and Marin. The varietal composition emphasizes chardonnay (79 percent), while pinot noir contributes the flavors—raspberry gelée, the pink of peach skin and other touches of red fruit. It feels youthful after seven years on the yeast, refreshing in its fine bubbles and gentle, fruit-driven flavors. A sleek and festive aperitif. (W&S 12/13; 1,013 cases) *Schramsberg Vineyards, Calistoga, CA*

**92 | Iron Horse** \$40  
**2008 Green Valley of Russian River Valley Russian Cuvée** Based on the estate's fruit-forward lots of pinot noir, this includes some higher-acid chardonnay to focus it. The red flavors of strawberries and cassis are sweetly ripe, but the wine itself is not sweet, balanced by leanness, finishing on fruit. (W&S 12/13; 2,250 cases) *Iron Horse Vyd., Sebastopol, CA*

## NEW YORK



**90 | Chateau Frank** \$21  
**Finger Lakes Célèbre Riesling Crémant (Best Buy)** Brisk, lemony and thoroughly refreshing, this sparkler's ripe pear flavors and mild pear-skin finish would merit a pairing with miso-glazed chicken. It's also an irresistible aperitif. (W&S 12/13) *Konstantin D. Frank & Sons, Hammondsport, NY*

**90 | Ravines**  
**2006 Finger Lakes Brut Méthode Classique** Toasty and bright, this classic sparkling blend of pinot noir and chardonnay has a nutty scent over firmly planned green apple flavors. Bottle age has lessened acidity, especially in its lemony, lingering finish. *Ravines Wine Cellars, Geneva, NY*

## AUSTRIA

**93 | Bründlmayer**  
**2008 Kamptal Sekt Willi Bründlmayer** has made sparkling wines since 1989, his latest release blends pinots noir, blanc and grüner veltliner. It's world-class fruit once creamy and leesy as well as firm and lemon crisp—a sparkling wine worthy of a big glass, to let the flavors expand and grow complex. (W&S 4/14) *Terry Theise Selections, Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

**90 | Langmann**  
**Weststeiermark Sekt Muskateller (Best Buy)** Classic muskateller in its brighter grape scents and floral restraint, this has a lovely richness, with enough pithy bitterness to balance the sweetness of the fruit. It's fresh and clean, a beach wine with elegance. (W&S 4/14) *Massanois Imports, Washington, DC*

## FRANCE

**91 | JCB by Jean-Charles Boisset**  
**Crémant de Bourgogne N°65 Brut** Scented of fresh cream, white flowers and spicy apple all contribute to the clean refreshment of this wine. There's brisk tension to the acidity, ready to take on a dozen oysters. (W&S 4/14) *Boisset Family Estates, St. Helena, CA*

**90 | Gérard Bertrand**  
**Crémant de Limoux Code Rouge Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs** A blend of 70 percent chardonnay with chenin and muscadine fermented in bottle and aged at least a year before release, this is a big, rich sparkler with hazelnut, mushroom and spice notes detailing the yellow plum fruit. It finishes dry, as

equivalent wine for lobster (W&S 6/14) *USA Wine*  
**90 | Dom. Bert**  
**Crémant du Jura** The fine stream of bubbles, round and clean almonds and cider a close match for a (10/13) *Martine's Wine*

**90 | Domaine**  
**Crémant d'Alsace** With its pale, leesy flavors, this blend blanc is zesty and ting acidity at clear (12/13) *Vintage '05*

## GERMANY

**90 | Hanser**  
**2009 Mosel Br**  
**Buy)** Thomas 1 acres of riesling wine, bottle-fermented for a year, is elegant sleek flavor, well shaped by mineral a sparkler worth (12/13) *Kyselá F*

## GREECE

**90 | Karan**  
**Amyntaion E**  
 estate on the in northern C in the classic bodied and cherry flavo acid at some anchovies f in Brooklyr

## ITALY

## LOMB

**90 | Be**  
**Franciac**  
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## VE NE

**90 | B**  
**2002 Ta**  
**Cuvée**



**90 | Valdellövo** \$26  
**Prosecco Conegliano Valdobbiadene Superiore BADE** Produced from 60-year-old vines, this undergoes its secondary fermentation in bottle. Its dry spice and austerity takes the wine in a different direction than many of its sweet contemporaries. The flavor combines dried pineapple and cider apples with the bitterness of toasted pignoli nuts. It finishes clean, bringing foods to mind, whether veal in a cream sauce or a plate of sheep's milk and washed-rind cheeses. *Delectatio, Magnolia, TX*

### VENETO PROSECCO

**90 | Foss Marai** \$21  
**Prosecco Extra Dry Textbook Prosecco**, this delivers lush apple and cream flavors with plenty of bubbles. It feels juicy, round and fresh, finishing clean. A fine summer aperitivo. *Saranty Imports, Harrison, NY*

**90 | Bisol Desiderio Jeio** \$18  
**Prosecco Extra Dry Musky**, with scents of Asian pear and a sweet vinosity, this is a tightly structured sparkler for sharp sheep's cheeses or vitello tonnato. *Vias Imports, NY*

**90 | Masottina** \$15  
**Prosecco Extra Dry Cuvée Rosé (Best Buy)** With the floral taste of fresh-picked strawberries, this sparkler has a little friction on the palate that ties the red fruit to the bubbles. It finishes dry, with a sense of chalkiness. A festive picnic wine. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

**89 | Villa Sandi** \$16  
**Prosecco Treviso Il Fresco (Best Buy)** Supple bubbles keep this wine lively, zipping away the sweetness and bringing out lemon-lime and green-apple flavors. A clean, pleasantly sweet sparkler for grilled prawns with fruit salsa. *Folio Fine Wine Partners, Napa, CA*

**87 | Casalini** \$12  
**Prosecco Treviso Extra Dry (Best Buy)** Neutral scents of green grapes and a touch of flinty reduction give this a clean, balanced

Bisol's Metodo Classico wine, this is a blend of pinot bianco, chardonnay and pinot nero, fermented in bottle and aged on the yeast for five years prior to disgorgement. That aging has brought deep notes of forest mushroom while holding onto fresher scents of bee pollen and wildflower honey. It's complex and lively with spice. *Vias Imports, NY*



**BOLLA**

**87 | Bolla** \$13  
**Veneto Rosé (Best Buy)** Scents of roses and light, juicy strawberry flavors fill this clean, dry sparkler. It tightens up in the finish around notes of cherry skin and flamed orange zest. Pour it with Peking duck. *Banfi Vintners, Old Brookville, NY*

### VALDOBBIADENE PROSECCO

**92 | Bisol Desiderio & Figli** \$28  
**2012 Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Superiore Dry Crede** A clean and fragrant Prosecco, this wine's white rose-petal scent and green-apple flavors last in a dry finish. It has the crisp refreshment of a cucumber, and creaminess to the texture to balance that crunch. For cracked crab. *Vias Imports, NY*

**90 | Bisol** \$52  
**2012 Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Superiore Dry Cartizze** Dry Cartizze is a bit of an oxymoron, but this wine pulls it off, sweet and crisp at once. The almond croissant and baked pear flavors enrich it, while gentle bubbles and tart acidity make it palate cleansing. A fulsome Prosecco for prosciutto di San Daniele. *Vias Imports, NY*

**90 | Carpenè Malvolti** \$19  
**Prosecco Conegliano Valdobbiadene Superiore Extra Dry** Invigorating in its fresh fruit and plush bubbles, this wine's crisp apple flavors and clean salinity provide the kind of refreshment that makes you want to drink more. The flavors last with a hint of smokiness. Delicious with speck. *Angelini Wine, Centerbrook, CT*

**90 | Bisol** \$71  
**2012 Talento Metodo Classico Eliseo Bisol** The top selection of

**90 | Dom. Berthet-Bondet** \$29  
**Prosecco d'Alsace Brut Blanc de Blancs** This bone-dry sparkler has

scents of bubbles that cushions the texture and clean. There's a fresh scent of wildflower honey and wildflower honey. It's complex and lively with spice. *Vias Imports, NY*

**90 | Domaine Pfister** \$30  
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**90 | Hansen-Lauer** \$25  
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**90 | Karanika** \$33  
**Prosecco d'Alsace Brut** From a biodynamically run estate on the high, cool plateau of Amyndeon in northern Greece, this xinomavro ferments using the classic Champagne method. It's full of earthy, with xinomavro's tart red berry flavor and sharp acidity. Point that out with some juicy tomato fritters or the fried calamari from *Bon Chovie* at Smorgasburg in Brooklyn. *WineWise, Oakland, CA*

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profile. Its simplicity would be refreshing on a summer afternoon. *Tradizione Imports, NY*

**87 | Casalini** \$12  
**Prosecco Treviso Brut (Best Buy)** Lemon-lime scents and citrus acidity work into this wine's bubbles, frisking up the white chocolate sweetness in the middle. A clean sparkler for panettone. *Tradizione Imports, NY*

**87 | Luna d'Or** \$15  
**Prosecco Treviso Brut (Best Buy)** Foamy bubbles carry fresh apple sweetness and plenty of mouthwatering acidity, ending on a bright, white pepper finish. For Parmigiano Reggiano. *Saranty Imports, Harrison, NY*

**86 | Da Luca** \$15  
**Prosecco (Best Buy)** A simple sparkler that contrasts sweet malted caramel and cream scents with steely acidity, this lasts on tight grape flavors. Chill it for poached prawns. *Accolade Wines North America, Napa, CA*

**86 | Zardetto** \$16  
**Prosecco Treviso Brut (Best Buy)** Muscat-like in its fruit-basket aromas, this contrasts that fresh fruit with notes of marzipan and almond sweetness. Serve it with fresh peaches at the end of a meal. *Winebow, NY*

**84 | Bellussi Spumanti** \$11  
**Prosecco Brut Enrico (Best Buy)** This sweet, floral sparkler contrasts light apple-scented fruit with the raspy, salty tang of the bubbles. It's balanced and neutral in its simplicity. Chill it for the white layers of a birthday cake. *Jack Poust & Co., NY*

### SPAIN

#### CAVA

**93 | Raventós i Blanc** \$33  
**2010 Penedès Brut de la Finca Pepe Raventós**, whose grandfather was a partner and head winemaker at Codorniu, makes elegant sparklers from estate-grown fruit in Conca del Riu Anoia—where he gave up the Cava appellation and is lobbying to establish a new DO. This wine makes a strong argument for the distinctive character of that region's fruit: The mineral trajectory of its pale ripe flavor tastes like fruit grown in limestone soil. With all the sophistication of a bottle-fermented sparkler—the pale almond notes and the scent of a crusty baguette—this wine's white fruit flavors keep juicing up from behind the tongue, whetting the appetite for *calamari a la plancha* or a seafood terrine. *Michael Skurnik Wines, Syusset, NY*

**92 | Castellroig** \$35  
**Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva** Dense white peach and yellow citrus flavors provide a succulent match for this wine's mouthwatering acidity. It feels smooth, substantial and balanced, lasting on the pale smoke of the lees and lemon. Chill this for nigiri sushi. *Regal Wine Imports, Moorestown, NJ*

**92 | Gramona** \$85  
**2001 Cava Brut Gran Reserva Celler Batlle** This has the character and depth of an aged Champagne with a different flavor set. Here it's Rainier cherries, toffee and lemon curd, a creamy meringue of a wine that needs decanting to show its best. The undertones of earthiness beneath the ripe fruit place it with a robust chicken dish with a confit of dark meat. *Eric Solomon/European Cellars, Charlotte, NC*

**92 | Mestres** \$29  
**2009 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva Coquet (Best Buy)** A powerful, masculine sparkler structured by red fruit flavors that hint at cranberry and strawberry, this balances that honeyed fruit with savory tones of white root vegetables and brioche. The flavors are mature, their leesy grip placing the wine with gamey meats like roast pheasant. *Think Global, Santa Barbara, CA*

**91 | Alta Alella** \$37  
**2010 Cava Brut Nature Gran Reserva Laleta** A bold and fruity style of Cava, this layers juicy white peach, Rainier cherry and loquat flavors over earthy scents of fava beans and wax beans. Broad-textured and completely dry, it's not a quiet wine, but food in Spain is not necessarily quiet, especially the kind of garlic-infused Catalàn *brandada* this would match with ease. *Palateur Imports, Philadelphia, PA*

**90 | Maria Casanovas** \$18  
**Cava Brut de Brut Reserva** Blending the three traditional Cava varieties, this presents a clean sparkler with scents of white tea and rose. It finishes with the richness of brioche and cream, cut by fragrant, pithy lime. Balanced for ready drinking, this is a great party pour. *Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA*

**90 | Castellroig** \$25  
**Cava Brut Nature Reserva** There's a green fig flavor that runs through this wine, weaving in and out of the scents of nutmeat, the rich, toasty lees and the vibrant acidity. That fig flavor returns in the finish, creating complex layers out of a simple wine. Pour it with *fabada*. *Regal Wine Imports, Moorestown, NJ*



**90 | Gran Bach**  
**Cava Brut (Best Buy)** A blend of macabeo, xarel-lo and parellada with chardonnay, this starts out on the scent of green grapes, developing spice and juicy quince flavors, ending fresh and clean. A party wine for grilled prawns. *Aveniu Brands, Baltimore, MD*

**90 | Gramona**  
**2007 Cava Brut Gran Reserva** This has matured toward golden layers of stone fruits and citrus, a saturated sweetness of lemon curd and white roses. It's a bittersweet confection whipped up by bubbles to pair with *jamón ibérico* and Marcona almonds. *Eric Solomon/European Cellars, Charlotte, NC*

**88 | Bodegas Ondarre**  
**Cava Brut Millenium Ondarre (Best Buy)** Made from early-picked viura, this is a refreshing sparkler with scents of lemon and fresh strawberries. The fruit is balanced and lasting, a great match with *jamón ibérico*. *Classic Wines, Stamford, CT*

**86 | Casteller**  
**Cava Brut (Best Buy)** This is juicy and broad, leesy flavor providing toast and nut weight to the sweet fruit. Serve it well chilled. *Olé Imports, New Rochelle, NY*

**86 | Isaac Fernandez Selección**  
**Cava Brut Biutiful (Best Buy)** Blended macabeo with a little chardonnay (20 percent), this develops scents of cinnamon and apple pie. Its unctuous texture is cut by the bubbles and by crisp acidity. For white beans and pork. *Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA*

**86 | Freixenet**  
**Cava Brut Cordon Negro (Best Buy)** This and juicy passion fruit scents combine with the flinty, rubber-meets-the-road reduction character typical of Cava. This is rich and round, finishing clean. Chill it for *grapes of Spain* and other tapas. *Freixenet, Sonoma, CA*

# YEAR'S BEST VINHO VERDE & RIAS BAIXAS

Our blind panels tasted **113** new-release Vinho Verde and Rias Baixas whites over the past 12 months. **Joshua Greene**, our critic for the wines of Portugal and Spain (Galicia), rated **23** as exceptional (90+) and **18** as Best Buys. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

## PORTUGAL WHITE

### VINHO VERDE

**92 | Anselmo Mendes** \$25  
**2012 Vinho Verde Muros Antigos Alvarinho** Anselmo Mendes makes wines to age, tending this for six months on the fine lees to build its juicy richness. The ripe fruit runs from sweet pear to something almost tropical, hinting at guava, while there's always a smoky earthen character and an edge of acidity clipping it. A creamy and powerfully structured vintage, this should be best with another year or two in bottle. *Addi Wines & Liquors, Newark, NJ*

**92 | Quinta de Covela** \$15  
**2013 Vinho Verde Edição Nacional Arinto** Rui Cunha makes this wine from a 15th-century estate on the north bank of the Douro, in the inland, mountainous southern reaches of Vinho Verde. Arinto performs well in this south-facing vineyard, fermented without added yeast or enzymes, then held on the lees until mid-January. It creates a wine that's pinkish in hue and completely dry in flavor, with crunchy green acidity pointing up the supple fruit flavors of nectarine and loquat. The flavors last long, mouthwatering refreshment for *sardinhas grelhadas*. *David Bowler Wines, NY*

**91 | Quinta das Arcas** \$18  
**2013 Vinho Verde Arca Nova Loureiro** From a quinta near Valongo, just northwest of Porto, this is a coastal loureiro that moves from tight and unctuous to fragrant, honeyed and gently complex as it takes on air. The wine's long floral spice carries pithy fruit acidity into the finish, lasting on a clean, elegant line. Balanced for any fresh catch. *Frontier Wine Imports, Dover, NJ*

**91 | Casa de Mouraz** \$17  
**2012 Vinho Verde Biotite** Antonio Lopes Ribeiro and Sara Dionisio produce biody-

amic wines from their vineyards in Dão, as well as this certified organic Vinho Verde. They ferment without added yeast and still get plenty of freshness out of the grapes, yielding notes of narcissus over succulent white fruit. Chewy, rich, smoky and firm, this has staying power—you could buy a case to drink some now and some later. *Savrio Soares Selections, NY*



**91 | Aveleda** \$13  
**2013 Minho Quinta da Aveleda** Aveleda's estate wine continues to evolve, this vintage combining the granitic power of alvarinho (20 percent of the blend) with the lemon-lime freshness of loureiro (80 percent, leaving trajadura aside). A textbook Vinho Verde with plenty of acidity tied to its grapefruit flavors, this will brighten any summer party, especially if there's grilled fish on the menu. *Aveleda, Pawtucket, RI*

**91 | Quinta de Gomariz** \$20  
**2013 Minho Alvarinho** Fragrant with pear and crisp citrus notes of grapefruit, this has a clean, satisfying richness. From a 42-acre vineyard in the granitic soils of Ave, in the center of the Vinho Verde region (far from the northernmost subregion of Monção and Melgaço where Alvarinho is awarded the DO), this feels like healthy, well-grown fruit. A simple, delicious white for a clambake. *P.R. Grisley Co., Salt Lake City, UT*

**95 | Paul Cheneau** \$14  
**2013 Cava Blanc de Blancs Reserva (Best Buy)** This is robust with clean荔枝 and sweet citrus flavors. It emphasizes yeast autolysis more than freshness, but it's not overtly oxidized. Serve chilled with Marcona almonds. *Wine Imports, Harrison, NY*

**94 | Cava Rose** \$19  
**2013 Cava Brut Rosado Trepal (Best Buy)** A lovely rose for charcuterie, this wine will complement chorizo with its scents of cranberry, delicious apple and rose. It balances the bitterness of lees with the sweetness of fruit in a mouthwatering finish. *Classified Wines, Seattle, WA*



**93 | Pata Negra** \$15  
**2013 Cava Brut Rosé (Best Buy)** This trepat-rose sparkling rings out with a burst of wild strawberry flavor. Then nuttiness comes up, light toast and fresh earth scents filling out the wine. The combination of red fruit, toast, earth and bubbles seems particularly geared toward ham, whether it's *pata negra* or Tenet's rose-raised Benton's sliced thin on a biscuit. *CVI (USA), Sacramento, CA*

**90 | Castellroig** \$19  
**2013 Cava Brut Rosat** Red cherry in color and intensely spicy, this wine has a fine bubble that gives it a zesty feel and creates delicate nuances to the fruit, even though the flavors are concentrated, belying that light and airy nose. Citrus, smoke and leather scents rise out of the glass, capped by a stinging acidity that needs food, like a chorizo-laden paella. *Wine Imports, Moorestown, NJ*

**91 | Casteller** \$14  
**2013 Cava Brut Rosé (Best Buy)** Candied notes of strawberries and watermelon fill this sparkling trepat, balanced by tangy acidity that brings tangerine flavors into the dry finish. *Wine Imports, New Rochelle, NY*

**91 | Raventós i Blanc** \$28  
**2013 Cava Brut Rosé de Nit (Best Buy)** Rich in strawberry fruit and pine-like spice, this is a clean, tart rosé for rillettes. *Michael Wines, Syosset, NY*

**91**  
 A blend of macabeo, chardonnay, this of green grapes, develops quince flavors, bold-party wine for grilled fish. *Baltimore, MD*

**93**  
 An Reserva Imperial forward golden layers of a saturated essence of roses. It's a bittersweet pop by bubbles to pour and Marcona almonds. *Cellars, Charlotte, NC*

**94**  
 Ondarre (Best Buy) This is a picked viura, this is a scents of lemon zest and Marcona almonds. *Cellars, Charlotte, NC*

**94**  
 This is juicy and providing toast and nutty. Serve it well chilled. *elle, NY*

**94**  
 (Best Buy) Blending chardonnay (20 percent of cinnamon and texture is cut by the acidity. For white beans. *Lorton, VA*

**92**  
 Bold scents combine with ts-the-road reduction. This is rich and a. Chill it for grilled tapas. *Freixenet USA*