

10 best sparkling wines and champagne for Christmas

From affordable Italian fizz to scintillating prestige cuvees, the corks to pop for a celebration



Photograph: Katherine Anne Rose for Observer Food Monthly

GiBo Asti Spumante NV (£9, Marks & Spencer)

Made from moscato, and retaining the same perfumed grapey character as a ripe muscat table grape, this sweetly foaming, light Italian fizz is terrific fun, whether you're serving it as a partner for fruit desserts, or with pastries and presents as a gently alcoholic (4.5%) start to Christmas morning

Lindauer Special Reserve Blanc de Blancs, New Zealand NV (£14.99, or £11.99 in a 'mixed six', Majestic)

A venerable name in affordable New Zealand sparkling wine, but the quality of this all-chardonnay cuvee has never been higher. At the 'mixed six' price, it's certainly a considerably better bet than most sub-£20 champagne, with lemon and apple, a touch of digestive biscuit and nicely creamy mousse.

Château de la Bretonnerie Les Perles de Folie Vin Mousseux, Muscadet, France

NV (£14.99, redsquirrelwine.com)

Red Squirrel, the intrepid young company that imports this and many other unusual wines, describes this sparkling wine as an "audacious new direction" for Muscadet. I'd go even further: crisp, lemony, incisive, yeasty, savoury and seafood friendly, it makes you wonder why more producers in the cool-climate region aren't producing sparkling wines.

Domaine Saint-Germain Coquelicot Mousseux Aromatique Doux, Savoie, France 2013

(£16.80, alpinewines.co.uk)

From the Alpine French region of Savoie, this is an utterly charming light sparkling rosé. Made from the local red grape mondeuse, it tastes like the essence of wild strawberries and raspberries, is light in alcohol at 8%, is subtly sweet, and has the softest, cuddliest mousse. Would work very well in lieu of sorbet as a between-courses palate cleanser.

The Co-operative Les Pionniers Champagne NV (£16.99, The Co-operative)

No apologies for returning once again to this tried and tested pinot noir, pinot meunier, chardonnay blend in

this year's festive 50. Made for the Co-operative by the excellent P&C Heidsieck, it's still fabulous value, still wonderfully rich and biscuity with incisive acidity and creamy mousse, and still the standout supermarket own-label champagne.



Col Vektorz Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Brut Zero Spumante, Italy 2014 (£13.49, fortyfive10.com)

While such supermarket proseccos as the excellent-value Tesco Finest* Bisol Prosecco (£8) provide plenty of icing sugar sweetness and frothy frivolity for the money, Col Vektorz's Brut Zero is a cut above the usual with its purity of ripe pear, the smooth creaminess of its bubbles and the appetisingly dry feel of its finish.

Raventos i Blanc de Nit Brut Rosé, Penedès, Spain 2012 (from £17.65, thedrinkshop.com; viaderwines.co.uk; bottleapostle.com; harveynichols.com)

The reputation of cava has been dragged down by the many standard cheap versions on the market, which is why Raventos i Blanc has chosen a different appellation for its classy range of Catalan fizz, a blend in this case of the traditional white cava varieties with a dash of red monastrell that has delicate raspberry, fine-line acidity and tingling mousse.

Star Buy: RL Legras Blanc de Blancs Brut Grand Cru Chouilly (£28.50, leaandsandeman.co.uk)

A 100% chardonnay by the smaller house-cum-grower RL Legras, using fruit from the grand cru-rated village of Chouilly, this is just fabulous value for this level of quality, a luminous, pristine fizz with laser-guided acidity and an invigorating interplay of lemon and green apple fruit and more savoury yeasty flavours.

Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne NV (£40, Waitrose)

We may have nothing else in common, but I share Winston Churchill's high opinion of Pol Roger: whether it's the majestic prestige cuvee named after the ex-PM (£147 for the 2004 vintage, robersonwine.com), the rich toasty current vintage release (2004, £56.99, Waitrose), or the reliably delightful, non-vintage blend, the wines currently being made by this venerable house are never less than stunning.

Billecart-Salmon Cuvée Nicolas François Billecart, Champagne 2002 (from £104, hedonism.co.uk; uncorked.co.uk; champagnedirect.co.uk)

When compared to its more famous rivals in the oligarch-and-Premier-League-footballer-courting world of prestige cuvee Champagne, Billecart-Salmon's Cuvée Nicolas François Billecart passes for good value. The 2002 is a scintillating wine, however, an exhilarating, crystalline and perfectly poised expression of the debonair Billecart style.

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/nov/15/10-best-sparkling-wines-champagne-fizz-christmas>