

# Decanter

## Premium Spanish sparkling: Panel tasting results

As the high scores show, you'll find many excellent-value, well-matured and characterful sparkling wines from within the Cava DO and beyond

Christine Parkinson  
July 20, 2024



Premium Spanish sparkling turned out to be a wide-ranging brief, capturing wines from several parts of Spain, vinified in both the traditional and ancestral methods and available at a range of price points. As Sarah Jane Evans MW said: ‘This tasting was [just] a snapshot.’

Pét-nat wines were tasted from various appellations and, as expected, were among the youngest in the line-up, typically from the 2021 and 2022 vintages. These were textural, often a touch smoky or saline, and the best showed vivid detail.

While the quality varied, the panel had no difficulty finding an outstanding example. ‘A delightful surprise,’ is how Valentin Radosav described the performance of the ancestral-method wines.

At the opposite end of the scale, Corpinnat, Gran Reserva Cava and Classic Penedès all flew the flag for traditional-method sparkling with extended maturation, many having spent five years on lees – and some more than 10.

Such long ageing typically comes with a top-end price tag, but Radosav saw good value: ‘There is some very interesting premium sparkling at around £25 – expressive, well defined and vivid, with the lovely complexity of maturation.’

Cava Gran Reserva and the Corpinnat designation were particularly good sources of well-priced, long-aged wines. The few rosado expressions, across categories, seemed charming but generally less ageworthy.

## A Catalan tapestry

An intriguing element of this tasting was the fractured and overlapping nature of the designations within Catalonia. There was much discussion about whether we could spot any differences between top-end Cava (especially Cava de Paraje Calificado – meaning literally ‘qualified location’), Corpinnat and Classic Penedès. In short, we could not.

There was one unifying factor for Catalonia, however: quality. Seven of the eight Outstanding wines were Catalanian. Radosav observed: ‘Quality has increased. I feel more confident recommending sparkling from those designations.’

## Local flavour

Indigenous grape varieties dominated, as expected. Corpinnat wines leaned heavily on Xarel·lo, but they weren’t the only wines to do so.

Xarel·lo is considered to be the most ageworthy of the traditional Cava varieties, so it was no surprise to see it prevalent in wines with extended maturation, including some varietal wines. These tended to be powerful, with lots of depth and a real sense of place.

Macabeu/Macabeo was also widespread, but we found plenty of other varieties, too: Montónega was particularly interesting, with its apple and floral notes and a clear ability to age; a lone Albariño was good enough to suggest that sparkling wine from Rías Baixas is worth a closer look.

Evans concluded: ‘This tasting showed impressive diversity; winemakers are working with different varieties and terroirs to express their styles. More than 60% of the wines were rated Highly recommended or Outstanding – and deservedly so.’

# Premium Spanish sparkling panel tasting scores

*Wines were tasted blind*



## Agustí Torelló Mata, Kripta Gran Anyada Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2013

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Agustí Torelló Mata produced the first vintage of Kripta in 1978; his son Alex is now winemaker. Gran Anyada ('great vintage') is a rarity, made in small quantities and only in years when grapes from three of the...

Points 95



## Agustí Torelló Mata, Kripta Gran Reserva Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2016

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Kripta Gran Reserva is the top cuvée, matured for eight years – under cork stopper, as is the norm for this producer. The 2016 vintage was warm and dry. Hand-harvested Macabeu, Parellada and Xarel·lo fruit...

Points 95



## Aroa, Le Naturel Pet Nat, Navarra, Spain, 2021

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Iñaki Olaberri crafts his low-intervention wines from vineyards high in Navarra's Valle de Yerri. Hand-harvested, organic Garnacha Blanc is fermented using the ancestral method – just a single fermentation...

Points 95



## Bufadors, Les Voranes Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain 2019

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Only the second vintage of this wine, the 2019 was vinified at Recaredo, as the Bufadors cellar wasn't yet built. Xarel·lo and Macabeu/Macabeo come from two tiny biodynamically farmed vineyards in Can Rossell d..

Points 95



## Cava Guilera, Agosarat Gran Reserva Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2006

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Guilera is a boutique, family-run producer founded in 1927, making Reserva and Gran Reserva Cava with extended ageing – Guilera Agosarat, the top wine, spends an incredible 17 years on lees. The...

Points 95



## Gramona, Celler Batlle Brut, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain, 2014

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Gramona has been making sparkling wine for more than a century – and farming grapes for almost 150 years. Its vineyards were certified biodynamic in 2014; in the same year, it became the first Spanish wine...

Points 95



## Raventós i Blanc, de Nit Rosé Extra Brut, Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedès, Spain 2022

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After centuries of grape growing and playing a role in the creation of the Cava DO, the Raventós family chose to leave the appellation in 2012 and champion the 'future DO' of Conca del Riu Anoia. Only indigenous...

Points 95



## Recaredo, Subtil Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain 2018

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Ton Mata, Recarado's third generation custodian, was a driving force behind the creation of the Corpinnat designation. The house specialises in vintage brut nature, always long-aged under cork and always...

Points 95



## Cava Guilera, Musivari Gran Reserva Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2007

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Lively quince, red apple, dried flowers, orange, sage, and chamomile. Citrus and grilled brioche with smoky praline and baked peach. Vivid and upfront, salt-laden, and mouthwatering palate. Lively, mature an...

Points 94



## Cava Guilera, Red Xarel·la Gran Reserva Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2015

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Pale lemon, green apple, and pear, with toasty aromas, and a creamy mousse. Lively acidity, with elegant floral character. Notes of hazelnut, yoghurt, baked quince, and apple blossom. Bold yet elegant with a fres...

Points 94



## Vins El Cep, Mim Natura Reserva Rosé Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2020

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Subtle violet and berry aromas. Surprisingly bold, saline, fresh, stony, and initially quiet, then earthy and bold, with dried fruit, sage and thyme. Buttery, evolving finish, soft texture with a gentle bite. Forward...

Points 94



## Albet i Noya, El Corral Cremat Brut, Penedès, Spain, 2013

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Bold, zesty citrus fruit and leesy, brioche aromas. Vivid texture, expressive fruit with red apples, quince, grapes, lime, tarragon, and sage. Fine mousse, elegant palate with concentration, juicy acidity, an...

Points 93



## Avinyó, La Ticota Gran Reserva Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2016

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Elegant green fruit, featuring fresh nashi pear and tangerine aromas. Vibrant, zesty mousse with, well-balanced and consistent. Leafy, buttery, candied citrus peel with black tea, bitter melon, and yoghurt...

Points 93



## Can Sumoi, Ancestral Montònega Brut Nature, Penedès, Spain 2023

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Fresh lemon and white flower aromas. Well-balanced fruit and elegant mousse give way to a subtle, clean palate of ripe apples, jasmine and freesia. Dry, crisp and nutty with greengage and toasted rye. Elegant,...

Points 93



## Codorníu, Ars Collecta El Tros Nou Paraje Calificado Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2010

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Lemon-coloured, fruit-driven with red apple and green melon aromas. Pronounced, zingy refreshing mousse, herbal sage, stony minerality. Balanced sweet notes, refreshing acidity. Gentle spice poached pears,...

Points 93



## Dominio de la Vega, Reserva Especial Brut, Valencia, Spain 2019

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Vibrant, zesty mousse dominates with hints of salted crackers, dried yellow plums, cherry, papaya, and leafy herbs. Integrated personality, freshness, weight, and elegance. Bold honey, cacao, toast, citrus,...

Points 93



## Gramona, Lustrós Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain 2015

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Lemon-coloured, ripe yellow apple, grape, and elegant yellow flower aromas. Expressive, refreshing mousse integrates well with ripe fruit, offering marigold, quince, kiwi, and creamy brioche flavours. Ripe whi...

Points 93



## Llopart, Reserva Brut, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain, 2020

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Fresh green apple and lemon aromas, floral acacia and jasmine. Vibrant lime, lavender, ripe greengage, mango and seaweed notes. Youthful, zesty, and clean with freshness on the palate and a long sandalwood...

Points 93



## Pere Ventura, Gran Reserva Brut, Catalonia, Spain, 2016

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Lemon-coloured, with a fresh spring breeze of blossom aromas. Delicate autumnal layers of hazelnut, dried apricots, and prunes, balanced tension of fruit ripeness, acidity, and textured mousse...

Points 93



## Raventós i Blanc, Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut, Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedès, Spain, 2022

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Elegant citrus and white flower aromas, with a persistent, lively mousse. Fresh green apple, melon, chamomile, and mineral notes evolve into orange blossom and violets, then sherbet, lemon curd and earthy...

Points 93



## Raventós i Blanc, Textures de Pedra Blanc de Noirs Brut, Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedès, Spain, 2019

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Aromas of lemon, ripe peach, apricot, and melon. Fruit-driven with pronounced mousse, crisp acidity, baked orange and potpourri. A firm mousse with mouthwatering orange and lime flavours, grassy, tight an...

Points 93



## Recaredo, Subtil Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain 2019

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Intriguing with yellow fruit, fresh pineapple, papaya, and elegant chamomile aromas. Refreshing mousse, yeasty, soft, creamy, and sweetly fruited with walnut bread, coriander seed, macadamia nut,...

Points 93



## Agustí Torelló Mata, Kripta Barrica Gran Reserva Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2018

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Fruit aromas subtly intertwined, showcasing ripe yellow apple, peach, and nutty hazelnut. Refreshing mousse leads to nuanced honeyed notes merging with a savoury, clean, elegant, mineral-laced finale.

Points 92



## Gramona, Imperial Brut, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain, 2018

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Pale lemon colour, with fresh yellow apple, white peach, and meadow grass aromas. Lively mousse, refreshing mouthfeel, peach, citrus, red berries, white pepper, and gentle acidity. Toasty, bright finish.

Points 92



## Nadal, Salvatge Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain, 2015

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Pale lemon hue, orchard fruit on the nose, refined mousse. Initial elegance with a burst of freshness, complex saline, citrus, and structured tension. Baked apple and mushroom, ripe kumquat and...

Points 92



## Parés Baltà, Bassegues Gran Reserva Organic Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2010

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Pale gold with complex aromas of peaches, red apples, quince, sage, rosemary, chamomile, and hazelnut. Flavours of baked apricots, dried herbs, yoghurt and brioche. Energetic, long and smooth, with an elega...

Points 92



## Pere Ventura, Gran Vintage Paraje Calificado Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2015

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Fresh citrus with yeasty brioche aromas. Gorgeous texture, refreshing mousse, and notes of dried apples, orange, sage and chamomile. Lovely evolution with toasty bread, cantaloupe, spiced fruit bread, and salt on...

Points 92



## Raventós i Blanc, De La Finca Brut Nature, Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedès, Spain 2020

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Pale lemon colour with aromas of fresh pear, melon, and white flowers. Vibrant mousse, fresh fruit, chamomile, and mineral notes. Floral hints of peony, foxglove, and catmint. Dry, zesty, and refreshing.

Points 92



## Recaredo, Terrers Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain 2019

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Pale lemon colour with fresh green apple and white flower aromas. Clean fruit, refreshing acidity, elegant style with russet apple, lemon zest, nutmeg, creamy texture, and delicate smoke. Long, intense finish.

Points 92



## Ramon Canals, Duran 5V Gran Reserva RD Brut, Catalonia, Spain 2015

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Pale lemon colour with a vibrant mousse. Aromas of yellow apple, quince, chamomile, and brioche. Toasty palate with cream, oranges, vanilla, and crushed peanuts. Sweet, balanced, youthful, and refreshin...

Points 92



## Torelló, 2a 19/20 Microvinification Brut Nature, Corpinnat, Penedès, Spain

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Elegant green apple and lemon zest aromas, fine mousse. Lemon verbena, saffron, wild herbs, ripe peach, honeycomb and baked bread notes – a finely tuned wine with fresh acidity and clean minerality. 51%...

Points 92



## Vins El Cep, Claror Can Prats Paraje Calificado Brut Nature, Catalonia, Spain 2016

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Lemon colour with fresh yellow and tropical fruit aromas. Bursting mousse, refreshing with diverse flavours from green to tropical. Elegant floral and lees notes. Dry, energetic palate with citrus, tangerine, and...

Points 92

## The judges

**Christine Parkinson** is co-founder of Brimful Drinks and of the World Alcohol-Free Awards. A wine and sake specialist, she was formerly at Michelin-starred Hakkasan Group for 18 years as group head of wine. Numerous career awards include The Caterer's Wine & Spirits Ambassador Catey in 2018.

**Sarah Jane Evans MW** is a Decanter contributing editor and Co-Chair of the Decanter World Wine Awards. Her latest book *The Wines of Central and Southern Spain* is scheduled for release in May 2025 (£35 Académie du Vin Library).

**Valentin Radosav** is learning and development manager for 5-star hotels in London. A qualified Advanced Sommelier and a DWWA judge, he was formerly head sommelier at Michelin-starred Gymkhana restaurant in Mayfair, having also previously worked at other top venues in the UK and Dubai.