

six atmospheres

[free] The Christmas Fizz One

Champagnes and sparklers that merit their price tags



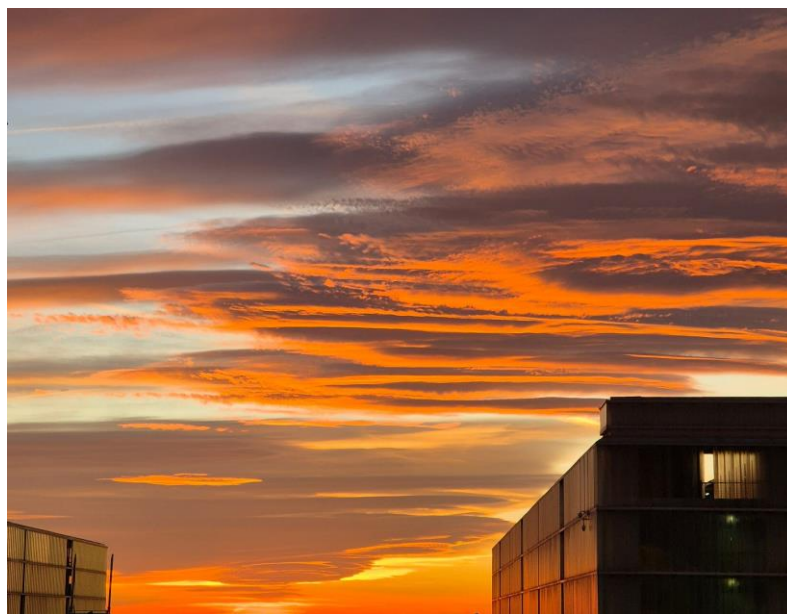
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Down to business. Wines. All of which I have either bought with my own money, or would buy with my own money if I hadn't spent it all on a new bathroom. These aren't really party bubble recommendations (although if they are, to you, then can you invite me please?), but good bottles to savour. If you're looking for recommendations on affordable bubbles in general, check out the Directory for House Bubbles:



The sunset from Barcelona airport last Friday. I've just returned from Penedès, where I've been tasting for the upcoming [timatkin.com Cataluña Sparkling Wine Report 2025](#).

I recently changed Six Atmospheres to subscriber-only, with one free email per month. Paid subscribers last month learnt about the character of [Champagne's Seventeen Grand Cru villages as Celebs](#) (if you have ever wondered which beautiful North-facing Grand Cru of the Montagne de Reims is 100% Roger Federer, then now you can find out - complete with a map), as well as pieces on the language of sustainability ([Boring, But Important](#)) and a [huge tasting of Lambrusco](#).

Ten good buys right now

Ayala Brut Majeur/Rosé Majeur. I think it's the second year I've recommended these - given that these are less than £30 in Waitrose at the moment they are much finer than a lot of mid-£20s supermarket fare. Pure, racy, proper champagnes focused on Chardonnay that aren't so expensive that you see January's mortgage payment disappearing down your guests' necks if you have to open a few bottles for a party. If you want brioche-toasty-showy look elsewhere - but if you want balanced and zesty at this price these are hard to beat.

Billecart-Salmon Rendez-Vous no.6 Chardonnay Grand Cru. This is a searing, exciting, complex and cerebral blanc de blancs from the wonderful village of Le Mesnil. Coming from the 2014 vintage there's a lot of wine here for the money - it's not an apero-style blanc de blancs, but a rather serious wine to think about serving with some appetisers around the table. A very good buy at £70.

Pertois-Lebrun Le Fond du Bateau 2014 This is a really fine blanc de blancs from an up-and-coming grower in Cramant (although the plot is in Chouilly). On the one hand it's so bony and fine - yes 'saline' to use the buzzword - but, on the other, now at 10 years of age really quite interesting and showing a little development. It's quite a delicate, aromatic, detailed thing, really; you could swamp it with big food, so drink it solo (or with oysters). £78 at the Whisky Exchange.

Philipponnat 1522 2016. This is Philipponnat's 'Vintage' level - ie mid level - offering. I had the 2018 recently, which was fairly good if a little simplistic, but the 2016 is great (this wine often seems to need a little while on cork in any case). It's just one of those champagnes that everyone I pour it for goes 'yum!' - full of golden, driving, ripe and enveloping Pinot Noir of the Grande Vallée (around Aÿ) where this fine boutique house call home, but ever so finely-drawn out on the palate. If you ended up drinking it with turkey and roast potatoes it would take it on (hold the cranberry sauce, though). Depending on where you are in the world, you might have 2016, 2015 or 2014 available (plump for 2014 over 2015, such as at the Whisky Exchange in the UK) Around £80

Marc Hébrart Noces de Craie 2018 If you want some real impact, class and the feel of something special without Prestige Cuvée bucks, this wine fits the bill. Hébrart are a major grower based in Mareuil-sur-Aÿ, and although this comes from the very sunny, sometimes a bit boring 2018 vintage, the old massale selection vineyards of Aÿ really come into their own. Deep, stony, ripe, exciting champagne (the whole range is excellent). £68.50 at Lea and Sandeman.

Elemart-Robion VB03 I came across these wines a few years ago at Printemps des Champagnes, and have just seen that Cameron of [Deux Six wines](#) has started bringing them into the UK. It's Organic, from the Ardre valley, mostly Meunier and based on 2020. It can be a little tough to find really good grower champagne made in a very straight, delicate, bright style, but anyone that likes their champagnes in this direction will find a [lot to love here](#). Around £55

Charles Heidsieck Blanc des Millénaires 2004 If you want to pick up something special for the big day it can be hard because many Prestige cuvées still feel pretty young on release. Hunting for mature wines can be expensive, but there's still some of this 20-year old stunner around, for less than the price of many current releases. I tasted it a few months ago and it's a dream. [£170 at Hic](#). Honestly, this is a splash worth making.

Other wonderful things from Spain and England

Raventos ì Blanc 'De Nit' 2022 - having just returned from Penedès, I can confirm this is very much a proper wine for [under £30](#) (a price which Champagne or England usually has to make some compromises at). It's a pale rosé made by adding Monastrell to the blend of Pepe Raventos' 'Blanc de Blancs'. Raventos was the first to leave the Cava appellation over 10 years ago, and has been going his own way since, working his own biodynamic farm as well as sourcing fruit from likeminded local growers. It's a pale, beautifully-dry and invigorating rosé that will rouse you from any festive slumber.

Harrow and Hope Blanc de Blancs 2018 I've been following [Henry and Kaye Laithwaite's wines](#) for many years now, although it has often been the blends and blanc de noirs I have connected with the most. Not so in 2018 - this is straight-up delicious. It's buzzing - not an austere, tangy apple style as we often find here, but something full of sweet citrus and beautiful oak spice detail, super bright and linear still but oh so much better than the vast majority of English blanc de blancs. It tastes like Chouilly/Cramant (but I'm not supposed to say that). £40 a bottle, too - a great buy.

Gusbourne Brut Reserve 2020 Probably the most impressive entry level Brut Gusbourne has ever made, and arguably the leader in the category as a whole. There's real presence in the Pinots here - this wine just lands with so much fruit quality you can't put it down. Benchmark. Widely available for around £45