

SevenFifty

What Corks Will Wine Pros Be Popping on NYE?

We asked 14 industry insiders to share the bottle of sparkling wine they'll be opening to toast 2020's end—and why it's the right wine for this moment



As this devastating year draws to a close, we may not be partying *en masse*, but that doesn't mean we won't be celebrating the end of 2020. We asked 14 buyers, beverage directors, and winemakers which sparkling wine they'll be toasting with—and their reason for choosing it.



Left: Raventós i Blanc de Nit Rosé (photo courtesy of Raventós). Right: Andy Myers (photo courtesy of Think Food Group).

Andy Myers, beverage director at José Andrés's ThinkFoodGroup, Washington, D.C.

Sparkling Pick: Raventós í Blanc 'de Nit' Rosé, Spain

"I intend to kick 2020 out the door with a bottle—or three—of this. It's a magnificent blend of Xarel-lo, Macabeo, Parellada, and Monastrell. While crisp and refreshing, it manages to maintain a high level of grace and elegance. The fruit is dry and tart with loads of crisp berries and lifted acidity. It's stupid delicious. Honestly, it should be three times more expensive. It also doesn't hurt that winemaker Pepe Raventós is one of the most vibrant and engaging people I know. When my wife and I pop the cork(s) to end this Nickelback of a year it will be nice to think of friends like Pepe and better days ahead."



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June Rodil. Photo by Matt Harrington.

June Rodil, partner at Goodnight Hospitality, Houston

Sparkling Pick: Pol Roger 'Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill' 1999, France

"I've been holding on to this bottle, and I think it's time to open this guy. 2020 has been a complete dumpster fire, but I can look back on the entire decade of having this wine in my

possession with fond memories. While all Champagnes should be celebratory, this one has a seriousness about it, with all its heady Pinot aromatics and richness of age. We deserve it and, fuck it, let's all party like it's 1999 again, but in the privacy of our homes. After all, it was Winston Churchill who said about Champagne, 'In victory I deserve it, in defeat I need it.'"

Raj Sachdeva, partner at Lakeforest Wines, El Dorado Hills, California

Sparkling Pick: Frank Family Brut Rosé 2015, California

"In 2020, California has had to deal with the pandemic *and* wildfires. We are all looking forward to better days in 2021, and that hope is something that makes us all human, and something we can celebrate. I'm encouraging our customers to support local businesses, and Frank Family is making some of the best sparkling wines in the Napa Valley. The Brut Rosé, a customer favorite, has the right balance of richness, minerality, and acidity, with refreshing, complex, tropical citrus flavors and a long, lingering creamy finish that makes you want more."

Stacey Gibson, partner at Park Avenue Fine Wines, Portland, Oregon

Sparkling Pick: Maison Jussiaume Blanc de Blancs, Oregon

"It has been hard this year to see small businesses go under while large corporations are growing and thriving during the pandemic. I can't think of a better way to usher in 2021 than to support small producers who are making great wines with care. In Southern Oregon, Jean-Michel Jussiaume is crafting some of the most stunning traditional method sparkling wines in the state. He was born and raised in the Loire, but now calls the Rogue Valley home. Each bottle is hand disgorged and individually numbered. The blanc de blancs makes a serious argument for the future of premium Oregon sparkling. It is elegant and classic, subtle but expressive."



Alex Fletcher. Photo by Kathy Tran.

Alex Fletcher, beverage director at Hospitality Alliance, Dallas

Sparkling Pick: Chapel Down Brut, England

"This year has been rough on everyone. A good bottle of bubbles is well-deserved for sure. That being said, I'm looking for two things this year: sustainability and price point. We are going to be sipping on Chapel Down Brut, which checks both boxes. It is a lovely expression of Essex, and

a fantastic example of terroir coming from chalk, clay, and loam soils, with the flavor of big red apples, strawberries, and toasty baked bread.”



Left: Licataa (photo courtesy of Licataa). Right: André Mack (photo courtesy of André Mack).

André Hueston Mack, founder and sommelier at & Sons Hospitality Group, New York; owner/winemaker of Maison Noir Wines, McMinnville, Oregon

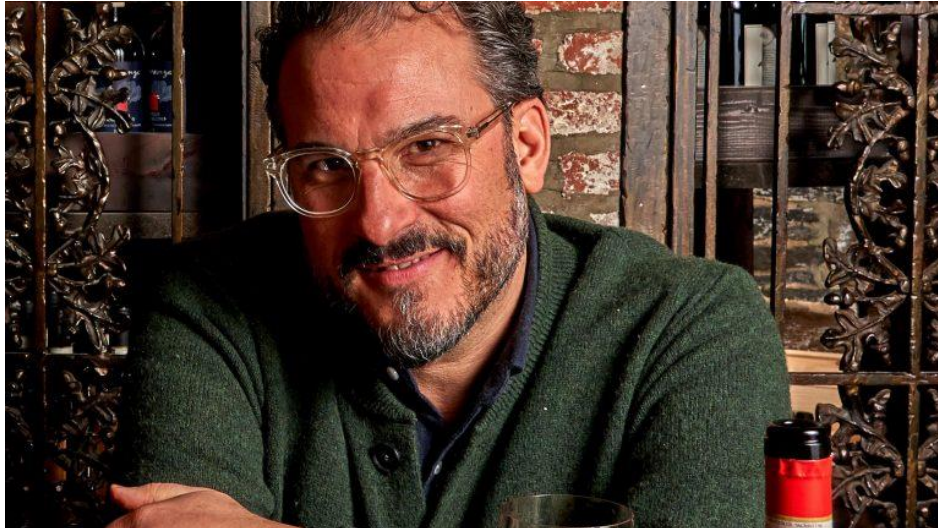
Sparkling Pick: Licataa Lambrusco, Italy

“My worlds are colliding in this wine. I was raised on hip-hop and later fell in love with wine. [Creator] Raekwon the Chef, my favorite lyricist of the infamous Wu-Tang Clan, lays it down with this fizzy, earthy, over-the-top Lambrusco. This wine is all about living in the moment and if there’s one thing that 2020 has taught us, it’s that we should be celebrating as much as we can while we can.”

Alex Burch, wine director at Bastion, Nashville

Sparkling Pick: (Folias de Baco)‘Uivo ‘PT NAT’ Pinot Noir, Portugal

“Winemaker Tiago Sampaio creates beautiful wines with respect for the land they come from. This wine, from the Douro Valley, is crisp and cleanly executed. I had the pleasure of visiting this vineyard back in 2017, so it’s always a nice reminder of a time when it was easier to explore wine regions around the world. Also, it’s at a price point that you can share multiple bottles with your isolation circle.”



David Giuliano. Photo courtesy of David Giuliano.

David Giuliano, beverage director at Il Buco and Il Buco Alimentari & Vineria, New York

Sparkling Pick: Erpacrife Nebbiolo Rosé Brut, Italy

“I would say farewell to 2020 with this bottle because it’s pink, sparkling, Italian, and rare—four words you almost never hear together—and, well, we all deserve something special this year. One of the first *metodo classico* Nebbiolos and certainly the finest, this is harvested early, spends a short time in wood followed by two years in bottle for a second fermentation, and is finished without dosage. This wine is purely expressed Nebbiolo—red fruit, violet, truffle—but sparkling and relentlessly precise. It’s like nothing I’ve ever tasted and only 5,000 bottles are made.”



Stevie Kim. Photo courtesy of Vinality International.

Stevie Kim, managing director of Vinality International, Verona

Sparkling Pick: Fongaro Riserva Brut, Italy

“In a year that was so focused on staying home, it would be remiss of me not to toast with something local, in particular a wine made from 100 percent Durella, a native grape of Verona. During lockdown, I had a chance to discover and appreciate this lesser-known grape. The

Fongaro Riserva Brut is a *metodo classico* sparkling wine with great structure and complexity thanks to 84 months on the yeasts, but with great freshness, notes of bergamot and quince, and of course a racing acidity.”

Liz Martinez, sommelier most recently at Casa Perno, in Birmingham, Michigan

Sparkling Pick: J-M Sélèque ‘Solesence’ Extra Brut Rosé, France

“This has been such a difficult year. When I drink a wine like this, I am reminded to stop and savor every drop. It’s a sensory experience that will whisk you away and into the new year. It’s composed of 45 percent Chardonnay, 40 percent Meunière, and 15 percent Pinot Noir. The Chardonnay leads with a broad palate, followed by a freshness with tart cranberry notes. There is a precision in this wine. It is finely sculpted, elegant, and refined.”



Left: Schatzi (photo courtesy of Schatzi). Right: Carlin Karr (photo by Joe Friend Photography).

Carlin Karr, wine director at Frasca Hospitality Group, Boulder

Sparkling Pick: Pascal Doquet 2006 Le Mesnil-Sur-Oger ‘Coeur de Terroir’ Brut, France

“This style of Champagne—bracing and mineral, but also mature and vinous—is what I gravitate toward when I really don’t know what I want or can’t decide, which is often how I feel this year. It is not like many other producers from Le Mesnil. It’s not the crystalline, super pure high-acid speed racer style of Chardonnay that screams of limestone and chalk, but rather it has umami and layers, and over-delivers for the price. It’s spicy with a gingery, minty thing that is so delicious, yet is definitely more snappy than broad Pinot-based blends.”



Jermaine Stone. Photo courtesy of Jermaine Stone.

Jermaine Stone, founder Cru Luv Selections, Brooklyn, and host of the *Original Wine & Hip Hop* podcast

Sparkling Pick: Savart ‘L’Ouverture’ Blanc de Noirs Champagne Premier Cru, France

“What’s better than Champagne? It’s the most versatile of all wines. It’s classic, but you can also pop a bottle in the club. I’ve always loved the Savart style, which is more modern and individualistic. The L’Ouverture Blanc de Noirs has a unique, hearty, and warm personality that is especially suited for end-of-year celebrating. 2020 has been a trip. Ringing in 2021 drinking my favorite Champagne sets the tone for positive vibes in the new year.”

Amy Racine, beverage director at JF Restaurants, New York City

Sparkling Pick: Henri Billiot ‘Cuvée Laetitia’ Brut, France

“This was the first tête de cuvée I had when I arrived in New York City. I find it comforting and a little grounding in drinking something that takes me back to the excitement of that time. Laetitia Billiot, who runs this estate, joined when the winery was falling apart. She’s a determined woman who held it together and cleaned up the mess one step at a time. The ‘Cuvée Laetitia’ is a little different than the house’s signature bright and zesty style—it’s slightly sweeter fruit and a little spicy. Laetitia’s is a great ‘lemons to lemonade’ story that reflects my hope for the new year.”

Daniel Lovig, beverage director at Pasjoli, Los Angeles

Sparkling Pick: Domaine Richou, ‘Les D en Bulles,’ Petillant Naturel, France

“As 2021 arrives, this crisp, clean, mineral-driven wine from Anjou, in the Loire Valley, is as direct and uncompromising as we need the new year to be. Without any additional sugars, and with 18 months on the lees, the wine doesn’t take shortcuts but offers us all the nuance and grace of a well-made sparkling at an amazing price. It has a complex bouquet and is wonderful on its own or used to mix with cocktails like the French 75 and Bellini.”

Alia Akkam is a writer who covers food, drink, travel, and design. She is the author of *Behind the Bar: 50 Cocktails from the World’s Most Iconic Hotels* (Hardie Grant) and her work has appeared in *Architecturaldigest.com*, *Dwell.com*, *Penta*, *Vogue.com*, *BBC*, *Playboy*,

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