

THE IRISH TIMES

Four sparkling wines to celebrate the return of indoor dining

These four very different bottles of fizz range in price from €11.49 to €57 and all are excellent examples of their type



Are we finally turning the corner on indoor dining? I suspect there will be many twists and turns in the months ahead, but as I write, some such restrictions have been eased. Many of you will be sighing with relief, others simply delighted to be able to go out again.

This calls for a celebration and that means fizz. Today we are looking in detail at four very different sparkling wines, ranging in price from €11.49 to €57. With sparkling wine, much depends on how it is made and where it comes from. It can be expensive to produce and Irish duties are punitive.

I have had more than enough prosecco, but if you still have a thirst for it, the Castellore featured here is good value, as is the Tesco Finest (€18), and the two Rizzardi proseccos (€17.05 and €12.95, O'Briens). A wine labelled frizzante will have less fizz than a spumante, and is not considered a sparkling wine by Irish Revenue. It is therefore cheaper, although frequently it contains in essence the same wine.

Our near neighbours Wales and England have been making wine for several decades. The soils and climate are proving ideal for high-quality sparkling

wine, usually made with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier, the same three grape varieties as Champagne. Many of the wines are as good as Champagne, but sadly cost the same too.

Champagne, once dominated by a few brands and supermarket own-label, has been changing rapidly. Among producers there has been a drive towards organic and biodynamic viticulture. Many small growers who once sold their harvest to one of the big names or a local co-operative are now producing their own “grower” Champagnes, usually in tiny quantities.

Irish importers frequently only receive a few bottles of each wine a year so they are not always easy to find and frequently expensive; however, some are exquisite. Wine importer Veraison has a mouth-watering range, available through independents.

Cava, the Spanish sparkling wine, can be very sophisticated. Usually made from local grape varieties, the best can vie with Champagne and other sparkling wines. Cava has been going through changes too. From next January on, there will be no fewer than five different quality designations. From 2025 the top three categories will all be organic, and there will be regional subdivisions too.

Despite this, nine of the best producers announced that they will no longer use the name Cava, and have founded a new organisation called Corpinnat. Others have opted to stay in.

Pepe Raventós, the 21st generation of his family to work the vineyards, went one step further in 2012 and began labelling his wines under the unofficial title of Conca del Riu Anoia. The wines are individual and beguiling, bone dry with real finesse.



Aldi Castellore Prosecco Spumante NV

11%, €11.49

Ripe pears, peaches and red apples with just enough acidity to stop it cloying. Serve well-chilled when the sun is out, or use to create a cocktail.

From Aldi, aldi.ie.



Rathfinny Estate Classic Cuvée Brut 2016, England

12.5%, €46.99

Very refined crisp dry sparkling wine, with subtle brioche, raspberry fruits on nose and palate, and lively lemon zest throughout. Try it with shellfish, such as oysters or scallops.

From Blackrock Cellar, Blackrock, blackrockcellar.com; Clontarf Wines, D3, clontarfwines.ie; The Corkscrew, D2, thecorkscrew.ie; Ely Wine Store, Maynooth, elywinebar.ie; McHugh's, D5, mchughs.ie; Redmonds, D6, redmonds.ie.



Texturas de Pedra 2015, Raventós i Blanc, Viña Més Alta, Conca del Riu Anoia, Biodynamic

12%, €52

A Blanc de Noirs, this has a rich nose with fresh crunchy red fruits and floral notes. Bone dry on the palate, powerful with red cherries and redcurrants, and a very fine mousse. A wine that demands food; try it with salmon or lobster.

From A Taste of Spain, D1; 64wine, Glashule, 64wine.com; Baggot Street Wines, D4, baggotstreetwines.com; Green Man Wines, D6, greenmanwines.ie.



Bourgeois-Diaz 3 Cepages NV, Champagne (Biodynamic)

12%, €57

Arresting exuberant red fruits with a mineral edge and a delicate toastiness coming through on the bone dry finish. Drink solo or with white meats – chicken with creamy mushrooms.

From Beau-Vino, Castleknock, beau-vino.ie; Green Man Wines, D6, greenmanwines.ie; Blackrock Cellar, Blackrock, blackrockcellar.com; Lilliput Stores, D7, lilliputstores.com; Matson's, Grange, Bandon and Youghal, matsonswinesandbeer.com; Pinto Wines, D9, pintowines.ie; siyps.com; Worldwide Wines, Waterford, worldwidewines.ie.

