

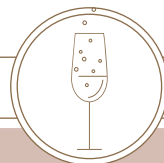


FLOW NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Someone started a rumor that Champagne is mostly for celebrations. And that a good bottle of bubbly will always have ‘Champagne’ on the label. Neither is true. While it is perfect for a celebratory toast, it’s also a fantastic wine to accompany a meal any day of the year. And Champagne is just one of many regions around the world making great quality sparkling wine (they only produce about 15% of the bottles on the market).

The first sparkling wine was a mistake. In the 1500s, French Monks put their regular wine in bottles before it had finished fermenting. It did just fine in the cold of winter, but warmed up in the spring and – Boom! – corks went flying, bottles exploded. People drank it and discovered how good it was, and over time scientists figured out how to make it safely. Today there are over 2 billion bottles produced every year. From bone dry to super sweet there’s a sparkling alternative for every palate.



KEY REGIONS AND THEIR SPARKLERS



“Come quickly, I am tasting the stars!” -Dom Pérignon

CHAMPAGNE VS. EVERYWHERE ELSE

All Champagne is sparkling wine, but only sparkling wine from Champagne, France can officially be called Champagne. They did such a great job marketing (and making) it that other regions began attaching the name to their sparklers. That is until the folks in Champagne protested (it’s like calling a German wine Napa Valley). Laws were passed, and although it’s common for us to use the

term for any sparkling wine, the wineries can’t (except for a few that were grandfathered in).

It’s true that there is something special about the wine coming from Champagne, but at an entry price of around \$40, it feels like a splurge. Thankfully, there are many excellent alternatives, such as Italy’s Prosecco, Crémant from the rest of France, Spanish Cava, German Sekt, and sparkling wine from elsewhere. Even the UK has recently entered the scene.



BEHIND THE SPARKLE

What puts the sparkle in sparkling wine? Carbon dioxide is trapped in the bottle and dissolves into the wine. The traditional Champagne Method is somewhat involved, but in short it goes like this:

1. **Make a regular base wine (in Champagne, they blend Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier).**
2. **Add sugar and yeast; put it in the bottle to ferment again.**
3. **Age it for a year or more, and let the yeast to do its magic.**
4. **Uncap and shoot out the dead yeast cells. Top it up with a dose of wine & sugar to taste.**
5. **Cork it.**

There are many shortcuts and mass production modifications, like running the second fermentation in pressurized tanks instead of bottles. If you're paying more for your bubbly, it's likely because it's gone through a more labor-intensive process.

TASTES LIKE...

The flavor of your sparkler depends on the region, grapes, and the style of winemaking. Bottle aged Champagne can produce yeasty flavors like toast, brioche. Warmer regions produce more tropical flavors. Rosé blends have more red fruit flavors. Prosecco is often more fruity and floral. Look for:

CITRUS FRUIT



Grapefruit
Lemon
Lime
Orange

TREE FRUIT



Apple
Peach
Pear

RED FRUIT



Cherry
Raspberry
Strawberry

TROPICAL FRUIT



Kiwi
Lychee
Melon
Pineapple

HERB/SPICE



Cinnamon
Ginger
Honey
Vanilla

FLOWERS



Apple Blossom
Chamomile
Citrus Blossom
Honeysuckle
Lily

NUTS DRY FRUIT



Almond
Hazelnut
Fig
Raisin

YEAST



Biscuit
Bread
Brioche
Toast

PICK A STYLE

The labels can tell you a lot about style. Here are some things to look for.

SWEETNESS

DRY

Brut Nature
Extra Brut
Brut
Extra-Sec
Sec
Demi-Sec
Doux

SWEET

VINTAGE

Good: Non-Vintage (NV)

A blend of several years.

Better: Vintage

From a single year, displayed on the label. Means the grapes were exceptional that year.

Best: Prestige

The big guns, like Cristal and Dom Pérignon.

GRAPES

Blanc de Blancs

White grapes, usually Chardonnay.

Blanc de Noirs

Red (aka black) grapes. Usually Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

Rosé

Red grapes are in the blend.

Regional

Many regions use local grapes.