

# AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 BUBBLES

*Explore the modern world of sparkling wine with these stellar recommendations for the holidays.*

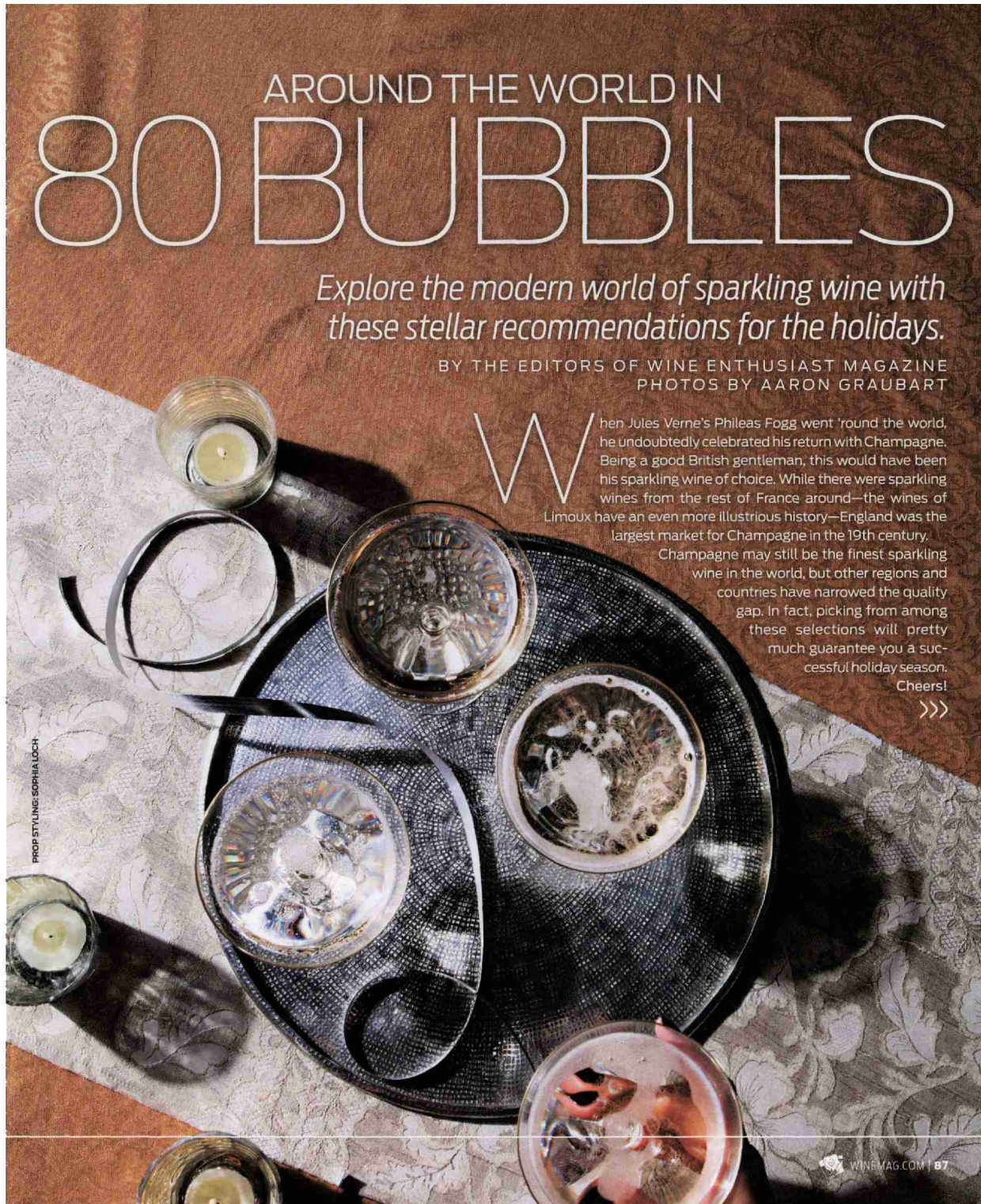
BY THE EDITORS OF WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE  
PHOTOS BY AARON GRAUBART

When Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg went 'round the world, he undoubtedly celebrated his return with Champagne. Being a good British gentleman, this would have been his sparkling wine of choice. While there were sparkling wines from the rest of France around—the wines of Limoux have an even more illustrious history—England was the largest market for Champagne in the 19th century.

Champagne may still be the finest sparkling wine in the world, but other regions and countries have narrowed the quality gap. In fact, picking from among these selections will pretty much guarantee you a successful holiday season.

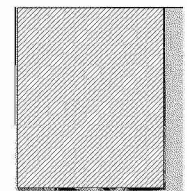
Cheers!

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## UNITED STATES

### Domestic sparklers come of age

California has had a long and complicated love affair with sparkling wine production.

Jack and Jamie Davies made the first big move. They took over forgotten Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga in 1965 to attempt a Schramsberg Cuvée with the help of neighbor Peter Mondavi. Schramsberg sparkling wine soon found worldwide fame, even making its way into the White House. By 1972, California drew wide interest for its Champagne-styled wines.

Korbel Champagne Cellars, in the coastal woods near the Sonoma Coast, has produced a wide range of sparklers since the early 1900s. Other homegrown producers include Iron Horse and J Vineyards & Winery, both tucked into the cooler reaches of the Russian River Valley.

In Mendocino, famed chocolate maker John Scharffenberger established Scharffenberger Cellars in the Anderson Valley in the 1980s. It's now owned by Maisons Marques & Domaines, the American wing of Champagne Louis Roederer.

California's ideal growing conditions for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay continue to seduce the Old World. The French have established sizeable New World outposts in Napa with Domaine Carneros, Domaine Chandon and Mumm Napa Valley, and in Mendocino with Roederer Estate. Meanwhile, the Spanish family behind Freixenet are making impressive wines at Carneros-based Gloria Ferrer.

There are also pockets of sparkling wine production in the Central Coast and Santa Cruz Mountains, including Santa Maria, Arroyo Grande and Sta. Rita Hills. An increasing number of growers and producers believe these areas possess ideal climates for sparkling wines. —Virginia Boone, Jim Gordon, Matt Kettmann, Paul Gregutt, Sean Sullivan & Anna Lee C. Jijima

**97** Roederer Estate 2006 L'Ermitage (Anderson Valley). This shows minute, slow-rising bubbles, and a bouquet of ginger, cinnamon, cherry and croissants. The flavors are layered and intricate, subtle but rich. A lush texture is supported by fresh acidity and a long and delicate finish. Mature, but not old, it should be great through 2020 or longer. *Cellar Selection.*  
 abv: 12.6% Price: \$48

**95** Schramsberg 2006 J. Schram (North Coast). A superb, well-aged reserve-style wine, this delivers abundant and distinctive flavors without losing its cool. This has attractive smoky, toasty and perfectly mature fruit aromas, and unfolds complex and appealing spice and earth flavors. The texture is plush and the finish long and smooth. *Editors' Choice.*  
 abv: 12.2% Price: \$110

**92** Laetitia 2010 Cuvée M (Arroyo Grande Valley). Laetitia's finest reserve bottling of sparkling wine impresses in this vintage, with bright aromas of fresh pears, challah bread and cherimoya gelato. The palate offers tropical touches of guava, with elements of soda and lime pith grounding the bubbly into a classic style.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$35

**95** Iron Horse 2010 Wedding Cuvée (Russian River Valley). Pinkish-gold in color, this blends 74% Pinot Noir and 26% Chardonnay. Fruity in peach, raspberry and blood orange, it's multifaceted and complex, dry and elegant with a long finish that leans herbal. The acidity is dialed-in perfectly, gliding gently and memorably on the palate. *Editors' Choice.*  
 abv: 13.5% Price: \$42





**92** Mumm Napa 2009 Devaux Ranch (Napa Valley). This dry, savory, small-production sparkler has deep layers of fresh-baked brioche and orange blossom. The color is golden yellow, a sign of its longer evolution in bottle. The finish is long and lingering, making this a memorable wine.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$42

**92** Syncline NV Scintillation Brut Rosé (Columbia Gorge). A blend of 58% Pinot Noir and 42% Chardonnay, this light copper-colored wine is intensely aromatic, with notes of passion fruit, guava and strawberry. While the aromas smell sweet, the palate is bone dry, with abundant brioche flavors, exquisite balance and a long, lingering finish. *Editors' Choice.*  
 abv: 12% Price: \$30

**More top-rated American bubbliies**

**93** Goat Bubbles 2011 Sierra Madre Vineyard Crémant (Santa Maria Valley). \$38.

**93** J Vineyards & Winery 2004 Late Disgorged Vintage Brut (Russian River Valley). \$90.

**92** Chandon 2003 étoile Tête de Cuvée (Napa-Sonoma). \$100.

**92** Inman Family 2012 OGV Estate Brut Rosé (Russian River Valley). \$56.

**91** Brewer-Clifton 2011 3-D Sparkling Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills). \$68.

**91** Gloria Ferrer 2006 Royal Cuvée (Carneros). \$37.

**91** Scharffenberger NV Excellence (Mendocino County). \$20.

**90** Domaine Carneros NV Cuvée de la Pompadour Brut Rosé (Carneros). \$36.

**90** Wölffer 2010 Cool As Well Blanc de Blancs Brut (The Hamptons, Long Island). \$35.

**88** Michelle NV Brut (Columbia Valley). \$14.

## France Think beyond Champagne

Today, even in France, Champagne isn't the be-all, end-all of sparkling wines.

Crémant is the name adopted by many French wine regions to describe wines made in the same way as Champagne, with the second fermentation in the bottle. It—and other styles of sparkling wine—can be found everywhere in France where wine is made. They sell between \$17–30, half the price of most Champagne. In style, they are almost all brut, or dry. In flavor, the variety is enormous.

Crémants from Alsace, made from Pinot Blanc and Chardonnay, occasionally from Pinot Noir, have taken the United States by storm because of their excellent value and increasing quality.

Burgundy's crémants, made from the same grapes (Chardonnay and Pinot Noir) as Champagne, can be impressive in their style and richness. Just across the Saône valley from Burgundy, Jura uses the same grapes to produce its Crémant de Jura.

In the Loire, there's an array of styles and names. Vouvray's Chenin Blanc makes ageworthy sparkling wines matured in the limestone caves under the vineyards. Saumur uses blends of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay for its more varied offerings. There's also a Loire-wide appellation, Crémant de Loire, that produces some of the best sparkling wines in the valley.

The Languedoc region also has a rich history of sparkling wine production, dating back to 1544. Early sparkling wines were produced primarily from Mauzac, a local grape, and called Blanquette de Limoux. Today, while Blanquette is still produced, production has expanded to include Crémant de Limoux, a Chardonnay-based sparkler with a smaller percentage of Mauzac included. —Roger Voss & Lauren Buzzeo

**91** Château Moncontour 2012 Cuvée Prédilection Brut (Vouvray). One of the top Vouvray sparkling wines, this 2012 is still young. That gives it almond, quince and pear flavors along with intense bright acidity. It's still missing the richer, toasty character that will come with age. Drink from 2016. USA Wine West. *Editors' Choice*. abv: 12% Price: \$20

**90** Domaine Albert Mann 2010 Brut (Crémant d'Alsace). A full-bodied, deliciously ripe blend of Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois and Pinot Noir, this is spiced with apples and crisp grapefruit acidity. Rich and creamy, yet fresh, it's ready to drink. Weygandt-Metzler. *Editors' Choice*. abv: 12.5% Price: \$22

**90** Bailly-Lapierre 2008 Vive-la-Joie Rosé Brut (Crémant de Bourgogne). A blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, this pale rosé has a delicious, fresh character. Red currants and raspberries combine with pure, crisp acidity and a lively texture to make a totally refreshing wine. Drink now, or age for a year. William Harrison Imports. abv: 12% Price: \$NA

### More top-rated French bubbly

**94** Leclercq-Pugeot 2002 Premier Cru Extra-Brut Millésime (Champagne). European Wine Resource; \$58.

**91** H. Blin NV Blin's Édition Limitée Extra Brut Rosé (Champagne). Vinamericas Selections; \$63.

**90** Domaine Charles Baur NV Emotion (Crémant d'Alsace). Grape New Importing; \$30.

**90** Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin NV Yellow Label Brut (Champagne). Moët Hennessy USA; \$48.

**89** André et Mireille Tissot NV Cuvée Indigène (Crémant de Jura). Potomac Selections; \$26.

**88** Jean-Baptiste Adam NV Brut (Crémant d'Alsace). Artisan Vines Distributing; \$18.

**88** Langlois-Chateau NV Brut Rosé (Crémant de Loire). Terlato Wines International; \$30.





**90** JCB NV No 21 Brut (Crémant de Bourgogne). This is a top-of-the-range crémant that's crisp and textured while also fruity. It has richness, laced with acidity and citrus. Fresh and full of apple flavor, it's an impressive wine that could age a year or two in bottle. Boisset Family Estates.

abv: 12% Price: \$25

**88** Côte Mas NV Brut Rosé (Crémant de Limoux). The aromas of this pretty, refreshing rosé are delicate and subtle. Faint scents of white cherry, raspberry and red-apple skin build strength and concentration on the medium-weight palate. The mouthfeel is bright, juicy and mouthwatering, while a toasty, spicy accent unfolds on the finish. Drink now. Esprit du Vin.

abv: 12% Price: \$16

**88** Manuel Olivier NV Brut Rosé (Crémant de Bourgogne). USA Wine West. \$20.

**88** Vignoble Brisebarre NV Brut (Vouvray). Good Company Wines. \$20.

**87** Saint-Hilaire 2011 Estate Bottled Brut (Blanquette de Limoux). Jack Poust & Co., Inc. Best Buy. \$12.

**89** Bouvet-Ladubay 2010 Saphir Brut (Saumur).

A tight wine with notes of almond and green fruit that add tension to the structure. The acidity is dominant in this complex, textured wine. It could age beautifully over the next 2-3 years. Kobrand.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$15

**BOUVET**  
 SAUMUR  
 SAPHIR BRUT VINTAGE  
 CHAMPAGNE

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ITALY

From Prosecco to Etna, Italy sparkles

Once reserved to a few select areas of northern Italy, quality sparkling wine production is booming all over the country.

Prosecco, the crisp and informal sparkler that's taken the world by storm, is made in the Veneto from native grape Glera. Producers generally make Prosecco in steel tanks, but a few estates are going back to the traditional method of finishing fermentation in the bottle, which leaves a fine residue on the bottom that adds flavor and depth.

Further north, Trento is one of Italy's most storied areas for sparkling wines that are refermented in bottle, a.k.a. *metodo classico*. High altitudes, which impart fresh acidity to international grapes, are key to Trento's finesse.

Franciacorta produces fresh and savory *metodo classico*s from predominantly Chardonnay and Pinot Nero. Thanks to Franciacorta's optimal growing conditions, many producers can top off disgorged bottles with wine or skip the dosage entirely, resulting in the increasingly popular *pas dosé*.

In Piedmont, Alta Langa is showing potential with international grapes, while some producers in Barolo and Barbaresco are making graceful sparklers from Nebbiolo. And Moscato d'Asti, the sweet sparkler that spurred imitators around the world, delivers tropical fruit with freshness and style.

Frothy, food-friendly Lambrusco is the king of sparkling wines around Emilia-Romagna. The best of these red sparklers are Grasparossa di Castelvetro, Lambrusco di Sorbara and Lambrusco Salamino di Santa Croce.

In Campania, Greco and Aglianico are yielding vibrant, refined sparkling wines. Sparklers are popping up everywhere in Sicily, but those made from Nerello Mascalese grown on the slopes of Mount Etna deliver finesse, flavor and structure.  
 —Kerin O'Keefe

**92** Feudi di San Gregorio 2011 *Dubl+* (Campania). Made entirely from Greco, this beautiful sparkling wine from southern Italy opens with aromas of lemon blossom, chamomile and yeasty notes of bread crust. The creamy palate delivers nectarine, citrus, lemon cream pie, honey and mineral alongside an elegant mousse and crisp acidity. Palm Bay International. **abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$44

**90** Benanti NV Noblesse Brut *Metodo Classico* (*Vino Spumante*). Produced from Carricante grown on Mount Etna, this wine opens with a fragrance of Spanish broom, lemon blossom, beeswax and citrus. The vibrant palate doles out nectarine, ripe green apple and toasted pistachio alongside bright acidity and a refined mousse. Wine Warehouse, Zancanella. **abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$40





**94** Cà del Bosco 2005 Anna Maria Clementi Riserva (Franciacorta). Aromas include bread crust, white spring flowers, cake spices, grapefruit and Alpine herbs. The palate doles out peach, almond, pear and a hint of brine. Vibrant acidity and an elegant, lively mousse brighten the creamy flavors. Drink through 2020. Banville Wine Merchants. *Cellar Selection*.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$90

**90** Cà dei Zago 2012 Col Fondo (Prosecco). Left to finish fermentation in the bottle and made without any added dosage, this displays a slightly cloudy appearance from fine sediment. The flavors include tart green apple, lime, white peach, kiwi and lemon pastry. The mouthwatering acidity leads to a bone-dry finish. Jenny and Francois Selections. *Editors' Choice*.  
 abv: 11.5% Price: \$20

**93** Ferrari 2002 Giulio Ferrari Riserva del Fondatore (Trento). Made entirely from Chardonnay and aged on its lees for at least 10 years, this boasts flavors that include baked bread, pastry cream, honey, vanilla, pear and candied lemon peel. It has depth and complexity, while the ultrafine mousse enhances the creamy texture. Drink through 2020. Palm Bay International.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$130

**92** Germano Ettore 2012 Rosanna Brut (Vino Spumante). Made from 100% Nebbiolo, this metodo classico boasts finesse and structure. It opens with aromas of rose and red berry that carry over to the palate alongside bright cherry and yeasty notes. Crisp acidity generates freshness, while the elegant perlage gives it a silky texture. Oliver McCrum, Volio Vino. *Editors' Choice*.  
 abv: 13.5% Price: \$35

**More top-rated Italian bubbies**

**94** Cà del Bosco 2005 Anna Maria Clementi Rosé Riserva (Franciacorta). Banville Wine Merchants. *Cellar Selection*; \$40.

**94** Fratelli Berlucchi 2007 Casa delle Colonne Zero Riserva (Franciacorta). Selected Estates of Europe Ltd; \$120.

**93** Barone Pizzini 2008 Bagnadore Riserva Non Dosato (Franciacorta). Vignaioli Selection; \$55.

**93** Ferghettina 2007 Extra Brut (Franciacorta). Empson USA Ltd.; \$68.

**92** Ferrari 2007 Perlé Nero (Trento). Palm Bay International; \$78.

**91** Bellavista 2007 Pas Operé Extra Brut (Franciacorta). Terra Moretti Trading; \$64.

**91** Rotari 2006 Flavio Riserva Brut (Trento). Prestige Wine Imports Corp.; \$32.

**90** Cà dei Zago 2013 Col Fondo (Prosecco). Williams Corner Wine. *Editors' Choice*; \$20.

**90** Maso Martis 2010 Brut Rosé (Trento). Solstars Inc.; \$50.

**90** Paltrinieri 2012 Radice (Lambrusco di Sorbara). Porto Vino Italiano. *Editors' Choice*. \$21.



## SPAIN

### Not just great values

While everyone loves a bargain, Spanish Cava is a class of wine that has been shackled by the popularity of its value-priced tier. For better or worse, Cava, in essence a Spanish sparkling wine made in the classic Champagne style, has thrived mostly because of its affordability.

For decades, consumers have turned to an ocean of inexpensive Cavas to fill their apéritif glasses and make mimosas.

But even if you have a taste for high-quality bubbly, then Cava, which largely relies on the indigenous white-grape trio of Xarello, Parellada and Macabeo (aka Viura), but can also include Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Trepat and even Monastrell, deserves your consideration.

Often fresher in aromas and lighter-bodied than Champagne, Cava is made largely in northeast Spain, in the province of Catalonia (although, by law, it can hail from anywhere in the country). The Penedès, located just outside Barcelona, is the capital of Cava production, with the town of Sant Sadurn d'Anoia functioning as the heart of Cava country.

Following are eight top Cavas tasted this year. The selections offer a cross section of styles, ranging from sweeter bruts to steely brut natures.

—Michael Schachner

**90** Castellroig 2010 Reserva Brut Nature (Cava). The nose on this Xarello-led wine falls between smoky and gritty, while dusty white-fruit scents prop things up. Peachy acidity and citric tang let you know this is a brut nature, while nectarine, rhubarb and green-herb flavors finish razor crisp and dry. Regal Wine Imports. **Price:** \$25

**89** Alta Alella 2011 Privat Reserva Brut Nature (Cava). Dusty apple and a hint of scrambled egg define the nose. As you'd expect given the lack of dosage, this is citric and linear in the mouth, with stony lime and green-apple flavors. The finish is refined, clean and lemony, with green-herb flavors. Palateur Imports. **Price:** \$21

**89** Raventos | Blanc 2011 L'Hereu Reserva Brut (Cava). Toasty, oaky aromas of popcorn and white fruits set up an elegant palate with a mild bubble bead. Apple, nectarine and citrus flavors finish long and pure, with a dry, citrusy lasting impression. Valkyrie Selections. **Price:** \$24

### More top-rated Spanish bubbly

**91** Alta Alella 2012 Privat (Cava). Palateur Imports; \$27.

**90** Castellroig 2009 Gran Reserva Brut Nature (Cava). Regal Wine Imports; \$35.

**90** Marqués de Gelida 2009 Claror Gran Reserva Brut Nature (Cava). Jorge Ordoñez Selections; \$31.

**89** Freixenet 2009 Vintage Reserva Brut (Cava). Freixenet USA. **Best Buy;** \$14.

**89** Juvé y Camps 2010 Milesimé Brut Reserva (Cava). Winebow; \$22.

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91 POINTS, EDITOR'S CHOICE

2012 BONTERRA PINOT NOIR  
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GERMANY & AUSTRIA  
**Teutonic beauties**

If it seems that quality sparkling wine from Germany, known as Deutscher sekt, rarely makes it to the United States, there's a simple reason: Too much is guzzled at home. As a nation, Germany consumes more sparkling wine than any other country—roughly four liters per person.

Rare as sekt may seem stateside, it's worth seeking out. In fact, some, like Peter Lauer's late-disgorged Riesling sekt (often from vintages back to the early 1990s) are obtaining cult status among America's top sommeliers.

Often uniquely floral and fruity on the nose, traditional method sekt is remarkably complex in its flavor profile, with bristling acidity and a delicate, dancing mouthfeel. Made from an array of grapes like Riesling, Pinot Gris (Grauburgunder), Pinot Blanc (Weissburgunder) or Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder), sekt offers a unique alternative to Champagne, frequently at a lower price.

If Austria has one key prerequisite for making sparkling wine, it's the acidity bestowed onto the base wines by the cool nights of its continental climate. The long growing season, often with stunningly sunny autumns, gives rich fruit flavors. The best sparklers are an ideal combination of the two, enriched by rounded yeast texture and flavor conferred by traditional bottle fermentation.

—Anna Lee C. Iijima & Anne Krebiehl

**93 Peter Lauer NV Brut Sekt Riesling (Mosel).** Delicate floral notes mingle with smoke and struck flint on this gorgeously composed Riesling sparkling. The palate is delicately pétillant, with soft, tiny bubbles that fill the mouth with layers of caramelized sugar, fresh pears, blossom and minerals. Striking acidity drives a long, umami-touched finish. Vom Boden.  
 abv: 12% Price: \$38

**92 Peter Jakob Kuhn 2012 Spätburgunder Rosé Sekt (Rheingau).** Dancing on the nose and palate, this Pinot Noir rosé fills the glass with whiffs of cherry blossoms and sugar cookies. Tart red-cherry and berry flavors are delicate and spry on the palate, lingering nervously in a luscious mousse of soft, rolling bubbles. Finishes elegantly with a bristle of stony minerals. Domaine Select Wine Estates.  
 abv: 13% Price: \$35

**91 Schloss Gobelsburg NV Brut Reserve (Kamptal).** A nose of honeyed autolysis is most inviting, while the palate does not disappoint, delivering bready notes, citrus, fine and persistent bubbles and a rounded feel alongside zesty acidity. This delivers exactly where it should: on the midpalate and the long, superclean finish that leaves a lingering note of lemon shortbread. Michael Skurnik Wines.  
 abv: 12% Price: \$29

**More top-rated German & Austrian bubbly**

- 93** Ebner-Ebenauer 2007 Blanc de Blancs (Weinviertel). Winemonger; \$49.
- 91** Bründlmayer NV Extra Brut (Kamptal). Terry These Estate Selections; \$22.
- 91** Salomon-Undhof 2011 Brut Nature Rosé (Kamptal). Fruit of the Vines Inc; \$30.
- 90** Bischöfliche Weingüter Trier 2011 Scharzhofberger Brut Riesling (Mosel). Schmitt-Söhne USA; \$30.
- 90** Dr. Nægler NV Sekt Extra Trocken Riesling (Rheingau). Winesellers Ltd.; \$19.

## AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND Experimentation and tradition

In a world of sparkling wines that's often conservative when it comes to change, these two countries have often pushed the envelope. What other parts of the globe could have given us sparkling Shiraz or fizzy Sauvignon Blanc?

While Australian legend holds that sparkling Shiraz was invented so that real men would have something festive to drink at weddings—toasting with “c-through” bubbles was evidently too effete—New Zealand's copious plantings of Sauvignon Blanc has inevitably led to its own dubious pursuit of carbonated versions.

Yet, the top-rated sparkling wines from these countries are all traditional-method blends of common Champagne grapes.

Tasmania is the vibrant heart of Australia's quality sparkling-wine movement. The island's cool climate suits Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and early international investment by the Champagne house of Louis Roederer helped put stalwarts like Jansz on the map.

Deutz was the Champagne house that first ventured to New Zealand, drawn by the same cool-climate motivations, but the region's Chauvet family took things a step further when Clotilde Chauvet crafted sparkling wines in Central Otago at Rippon and Quartz Reef.

Today, while many of the French principals have pulled out, their influences remain in the South Pacific. —Joe Czerwinski

**92 Clover Hill 2007 Pipers River Methode Traditionnelle (Tasmania).** Fully mature, this is a medium-bodied, creamy-textured sparkling wine that could handle main-course duties. Notes of brioche dominate, filled out by hints of pineapple and citrus, followed by a lingering finish. Goelet Wine Estates.  
 abv: 13% Price: \$40

**91 Huia 2009 Brut (Marlborough).** Excellent sparkling by any measure, Huia's latest release—58% Chardonnay, 42% Pinot Noir—was aged in oak prior to second fermentation, then spent three years on the lees. It's a deep straw in color, with bold notes of grilled brioche and a rich texture, yet finishes fully dry and even a little bit chalky. USA Wine West.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$36

**90 Quartz Reef NV Methode Traditionnelle (Central Otago).** The 100% Pinot Noir Methode Traditionnelle Rosé may be even better—and harder to find—but this blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay is no slouch. The aromas are toasty and penetrating, the flavors add melon and citrus notes, and the finish is refreshingly dry, with a dosage of only 7 g/L. Station Imports Inc.  
 abv: 12.5% Price: \$32

### More top-rated Australian & New Zealand bubbles

**89 Sidewood 2011 Isabella Rosé Methode Traditionnelle (Adelaide Hills),** USA Wine West; \$38.

**88 Kim Crawford 2009 Small Parcels Fizz Methode Traditionnelle (Marlborough),** Constellation Brands; \$35.

**88 De Bortoli NV Emeri Frost Moscato (South Eastern Australia),** De Bortoli Wines USA Inc. *Best Buy*; \$12.

**87 Sophora NV Rosé (New Zealand),** Distinguished Vineyards & Wine Partners; \$16.

**88 Innocent Bystander 2013 Moscato Rosé (Victoria),** Old Bridge Cellars; \$14



## SOUTH AMERICA & SOUTH AFRICA

### More Southern Hemisphere selections

Sparkling wines from South America are generally domestic products that locals use to celebrate special occasions. Little of it is exported. And, after 15 years of reviewing South American wines at *Wine Enthusiast*, we've yet to encounter a truly stunning sparkler from the continent. But there are still a few worth checking out.

Brazil is the nominal sparkling-wine leader in South America, although it's only now starting to export bubbles. Brazilian sparklers are based mostly on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, although there's also plenty of sparkling Moscato. The best examples are crisp, with overriding freshness and bright flavors of citrus. Top producers include Cave Geisse, Vinicola Salton and Casa Valduga.

South Africa produces a variety of sparkling wines, from bottle-fermented to Charmat selections—even sparkling Pinotage. The highest-quality examples are labeled Methode Cap Classique (MCC), sparkling wines that are produced using the traditional méthode Champenoise, with a minimum of 12 months aging. MCCs can be produced from traditional Champagne-blend varieties, but also Chenin Blanc or Sauvignon Blanc. From fresh and fruity to mature and complex, there's a *kaapse vonkel* (Cape sparkle) for every palate and wallet. —Michael Schachner & Lauren Buzzeo

**89** Graham Beck 2009 Premier Cuvée Méthode Cap Classique Blanc de Blancs Brut (Robertson). This well-balanced sparkler leads with aromas of lemon and orange, lightly toasted brioche and subtle fynbos herbs. The palate is creamy and smooth, with crisp acidity and medium carbonation that lifts the finish. Delicious now, or hold through 2017. Maritime Wine Trading. abv: 12% Price: \$26

**87** Apaltagua NV Costero Extra Brut (San Antonio). Yeasty on the nose, with ham, salami and wheat notes. The palate isn't shy, as full-force malic acid brings plenty of kick. Flavors of cider and butterscotch finish short, but clean. Global Vineyard Importers. abv: 13% Price: \$19

**87** Cruzat NV Cuvée Reserve Nature (Mendoza). This blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay is Cruzat's best bubbly. Citrus and nectarine aromas are fruity, while it's fresh on the palate, with orange and green-herb flavors. The finish is citrusy. Elixir Wine Group. abv: 12.5% Price: \$23

### More top-rated South American & South African bubbliess

**88** Desiderius Pongrácz NV Méthode Cap Classique Pinot Noir-Chardonnay (Western Cape). Z Wines USA; \$20.

**87** Avondale NV Armilia Brut Méthode Cap Classique (Coastal Region). International Spirits & Wines, LLC.; \$25.

**87** Boschendal NV Méthode Cap Classique Brut Rosé (Western Cape). Pacific Highway Wines & Spirits; \$24.

**86** Ruca Malen NV Brut (Uco Valley). Opici Wines; \$25.

**85** Valdivieso NV Brut (Chile). Wine Bridge Imports; \$12.