

Let's *Wine* About it



WINE & CHEESE PARTY

Looking to entertain in a casual, laid-back style this winter? Consider a wine-and-cheese party. No prior wine- or cheese-buying experience is necessary.

When selecting cheeses, remember that soft ones tend to be either mild or tart, while hard cheeses are often salty and more assertive in flavor. Use this guide when selecting wines. Young, fresh, and creamy cheeses are best with light, acidic whites. Apply the same thought to most aged, full-bodied cheeses and red wine.

Tips:

Red Wine

Cabernet Sauvignon--sharp Cheddar, Swiss, Asiago, aged dry Jack

Merlot--sharp Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Gouda

White Wine

Chardonnay - mild Cheddar, smoked mozzarella

Sauvignon Blanc - blue (Gorgonzola and Roquefort), goat, Comte, Gruyère

Riesling - Brie, Camembert, Gruyère

Champagne or sparkling wine - Brie, Camembert, fontina

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

In order to better serve our members, we need to receive any new info and changes regarding your status (i.e., change of address, new credit card number, etc.) by the 20th of each month.

PLEASE NOTIFY US BY PHONE (888) 646-5446, Ext. 13. OR EMAIL club@tastemonterey.com

Any information received after the 20th of each month will not take effect until the following month. Change of address updates, for the upcoming shipment, called in after the 20th, may be subject to a special handling fee.

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Mix & Match

ANY OF THE CURRENT OR PREVIOUS CLUB WINES TO RECEIVE 25% OFF 12 BOTTLES OR 20% OFF 6

DECEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 2/28/2025	REGULAR PRICE*	12-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*	6-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*
Pierce Ranch Vineyards 2019 Mal/Zin		\$30.00	\$22.50	\$24.00
Sofia NVV Sofia Sparkling		\$21.00	\$15.75	\$16.80
Shale Canyon 2019 Merlot		\$30.00	\$22.50	\$24.00
Folktale Rose' 2023 Folktale Rose'		\$32.00	\$24.00	\$25.60
NOVEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 1/31/2025			
Wrath 2022 EX Pinot Noir		\$29.00	\$21.75	\$23.20
Joyce 2023 Submarine Canyon Chardonnay		\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
Joyce 2021 GSM		\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
Wrath 2023 EX Sauvignon Blanc		\$19.00	\$14.25	\$15.20
OCTOBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 12/31/2024			
Paysan 2022 San Antonio Valley Petite Sirah		\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
Le Mistral 2020 Arroyo Seco Chardonnay		\$30.00	\$22.50	\$24.00
Metz Road 2021 Pinot Noir		\$36.00	\$27.00	\$28.80
Paysan 2023 Arroyo Seco Sauvignon Blanc		\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
PRIVATE RESERVE CLUB	PRICES EXPIRE 02/28/2025			
Scratch 2020 KW Ranch Pinot Noir		\$55.00	\$41.25	\$44.00
Shale Canyon 2019 Tempranillo		\$36.00	\$27.00	\$28.80
Folktale NVV Sparkling Rose		\$42.00	\$31.50	\$33.60

TO ORDER, CALL TOLL-FREE: 888-646-5446  
\*PRICES LISTED REFLECT PRICE PER BOTTLE. NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.

TASTING MONTEREY

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY



Missing our view? Check out our live webcam while you sip on some Monterey Wine.

ALL ABOUT THE *Bubbles*

There just seems to be something special about wine with bubbles in it. Be it at a wedding, Christmas or on New Year's Eve - opening a bottle of sparkling wine marks a special occasion. Those effervescent bubbles seem to have a way of bringing out smiles, and its reputation of making one "giddy" far quicker than expected is well known (and memories of following day head-aches solidify the tender remembrances).



Perhaps we should begin by defining a few things. First off, a bottle of sparkling wine can technically only be called "champagne" if it is grown and produced in the Champagne region of France, similar to brandy from Cognac or port from Portugal. Therefore, when discussing "the bubbly", we should stick with referring to it as sparkling wine on a generalized basis (this is also a public safety announcement as French regulatory agents take this matter extremely seriously). Secondly, a sparkling wine is defined as a wine with significant levels of carbon dioxide within it, which provides the bubbles.

It does make one wonder though how anyone ever perceived that bubbles in wine would be a good thing...I mean can you imagine having your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon fizzing with bubbles? No, no you cannot, which is exactly what people thought centuries ago when they noticed that occasionally their wine bottles had carbonation in them.



You likely recognize the name Dom Perignon and associate him with champagne/sparkling wine. In fact, the Dom Perignon champagne label may arguably be more recognized than any other wine bottle on the planet. And although it is appropriate for Monsieur Perignon to receive credit for promoting quality sparkling wine, he by no means invented the process; his discovery of the positive attributes of carbonation in wine was actually accidental. Perignon was tasked originally with figuring out how to rid the situation from certain bottles occasionally having bubbles in them!

Now, let's get into the vineyards. It may not be surprising that the most common varietal for white sparkling wine production is Chardonnay, but it may be that the second is most likely Pinot Noir. Grapes used for sparkling wine production tend to be best when sourced from cooler growing climates, which explains why the Champagne region, far in the northeast of France, is the ancestral home of sparkling wines (and this is also why our own Monterey County produces some fantastic sparklers as well!).

Sparkling wine grapes are harvested early in order to capture high acidity levels and to avoid high sugar levels; avoiding tannins is another goal. To deter this as much as possible, extra care is taken during the harvest to avoid splitting of the berries, and

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December Referrals



Refer a friend to the Monterey Wine Club, and after they join, you get a \$20.00 Gift Card!



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# Monthly Wine Selections

## PIERCE RANCH VINEYARDS - 2019 Mal/Zin



Pierce Ranch Vineyards is a small, family-owned operation centered in southern Monterey County's San Antonio Valley appellation. They produce limited-run, estate-grown wines with an emphasis on Spanish and Portuguese varieties.

A somewhat unusual but extremely pleasing blend of Malbec, Zinfandel, and Alicante Bouschet, this is the sleeper hit in the new set of releases. Somewhat rich and yet not heavy or overly tannic in any way, the combination of black fruit, spice, earth, and minerality makes for a sumptuous, lively wine that's a nice match for the season.

26% Malbec, 48% Zinfandel, 26% Alicante Bouchet

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2029

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## SOFIA - N/V Sparkling



Elegant, with lively bubbles and flavors of ripe fruit and spice. Francis Ford Coppola's tribute to his only daughter. Sofia wines are delicious, refreshing, and fun. Made from a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir Rosé, Sofia Blanc de Blancs bestows an elegant fragrance, fresh flavors and light effervescence. Perfect for poolside sipping and starlit celebrations.

Scents: zesty floral notes, rose. Flavors: spice, ripe fruit, salty buttery biscuit. Finish: creamy and intense, yet delicate with a fresh finish.

91.9% Chardonnay, 6.9% Pinot Noir Rosé, 1.2% Other

12.0% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2027

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## SHALE CANYON - 2019 Merlot (Club Red)



Shale Canyon Wines started vinting small lots of hand crafted varietals in 2008. When they started, their main focus was on 100% varietal wines such as Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel. Their estate fruit is hand harvested and fermented in small batches. Their winery is a 100% "Off Grid" solar powered facility. They use well water for their water supply and a backup propane generator for those overcast days that they need to run the equipment.

This 2019 is a big, full bodied Merlot with classic Bordeaux attributes. This wine begins with a big bouquet of ripe fruit and violets. The middle is graced with raspberry, pomegranate and cherry. A long finish of cedar and firm tannins. Only 246 cases produced.

100% Merlot

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2026

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## FOLKTALE - 2023 'Rose' (Club Blanc)



The 2023 Folktale Rosé is once again composed of 100% Pinot Noir from our beautiful Salinas Valley. Pinot Noir makes for a great rosé with high acid and a floral nose. Grapes were hand harvested between late September and early October and pressed upon arrival at the winery, giving us a tinge of pink color from the short time the juice was left with the skins. From there, the fermentation took place in both stainless steel for freshness and aroma (68%) and neutral French oak for texture on the palate (32%). Once fermentation finished, the individual lots were blended and bottled in early December.

Light salmon color, this rosé has notes of bright rose petals, strawberries, kiwi, honeysuckle, apricot, and tropical fruit undertones. The wine has a beautiful sweetness from the fruit but plenty of acid to hold it up.

100% Pinot Noir

12.0% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2025

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

### Cover Article Continued

grapes destined for sparkling wine production are pressed as soon as possible.

Moving on, let's venture into the winemaking process. White wine grapes are the most popular for use in making sparkling wines, and it is even possible for winemakers to make varietal sparklers, such as *blanc de blancs* (white of whites), which is 100% Chardonnay. However, the vast majority of sparkling wines produced are blends of several varietals, vineyards, and vintages - this is why it is not uncommon at all to see non-vintage sparkling wines.

Red wine grapes can be used for white sparkling production (as the juice is initially clear without prolonged exposure to grape skins), and these sparklers are known as *blanc de noirs* (white of blacks). *Rosé* sparkling wines are quite popular, especially in Spain and Portugal. Although rare, there are also red sparklers.

For all sparkling wines, primary fermentation occurs in the winemaking process, just as it does with still wine production. The alteration in the process that distinguishes sparkling production occurs with the introduction of a secondary fermentation (which can occur naturally on its own, explaining why Perignon began experimenting). This secondary fermentation is conducted in various methods explained below, but a by-product is the creation of carbon dioxide captured in the wine. Estimates of the amount of bubbles one bottle of sparkling can produce ranges from 50 to 250 million...that's a lot of bubbles!

As for the different methods to encourage the secondary fermentation, the most well known is the *méthode champenoise*, sometimes referred to as the "traditional" method. In this method, a base blend wine (*cuvée*) is bottled with sugar and yeast, with the sugar providing a food source for the yeast, eventually releasing carbon dioxide into the wine. The dead yeast cells (called "lees") are removed from the wine and *voilà!*

Another method used to produce sparkling wines is the *method charmant*. This method uses stainless steel tanks that are pressurized, which stimulates the process of the yeast and sugar interaction, and then the wine is bottled (i.e. basically it's a faster process than the previously described method). The last method used is carbon injection, which doesn't involve a secondary fermentation process, and instead consists of injecting carbon dioxide gas directly into the wine.

*Brut* or *Doux*: how sweet do you like your sparkling wines? The amount of sugar introduced for the secondary fermentation process will ultimately determine the level of sweetness in a sparkling wine. *Brut Natural* is the driest, although fairly limited in production. *Extra Brut* is the more common driest style of sparkling wine you will encounter, followed by *Brut*, which is arguably the most popular of all styles. *Extra Dry* (also called *Extra Sec*) is slightly less dry than *Brut*, followed by *Sec*. The two sweetest styles of sparkling wine are *Demi-Sec* and then *Doux*.

Sweet or dry in style, sparkling wines are produced around the world. California and France are major producers; the Aussies have a Shiraz sparkler; the Spanish produce *Cava*; the Portuguese have *Espumante*; the Germans have *Sekt*; the South Africans produce *Cap Classique*; and the Italians have various versions, with their generic term for sparkling wine being *Spumante*.

So, there you have a brief overview of this intriguing style of wine, and we hope that you will savor your glasses of *bubbly* this holiday season. One last point is that although it may be fun to open a bottle of sparkling wine by "popping" the cork out and projecting a burst of fizz...keep in mind that by doing this you are doing your bottle a great disservice. Not only are you wasting wine (nothing less than a crime on its own), but you'll be releasing so much carbon dioxide that you will not be able to fully appreciate the bubbling in your glass!

**Bryce Ternet** - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula"



## Entertain with Wine



### Holiday Crepes

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- vegetable oil

#### Directions

Combine the salt, sugar, eggs, milk, and butter in a blender until well mixed. Add the flour and blend until smooth. Let the batter chill in the refrigerator for at least half an hour.

When you're ready to cook, heat a small amount of vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat, then blend the batter once more.

Drop a few tablespoons of batter in the pan, tilting and rotating the pan to spread the batter uniformly over the bottom.

Cook until the underside has slightly browned and bubbles form on the top of the crepe, then flip the crepe and cook until the other side has slightly browned.

As you cook them, stack the finished crepes on a warm dish, then, when you're ready to eat, let everyone fix them to their liking.

Makes approximately 20 crepes.