

*Sparkling Wines*

*Seminar*

*With Nicolay Castro*

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# France

## Champagne



- Champagne is the premier sparkling wine of France, indeed of the world, the one most producers outside of the region try to imitate.
- The main varietals used in Champagne production are chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier. Certain minor varietals are also allowed to be used by law: petit meslier, arbane, pinot de juillet, pinot gris, and pinot blanc.
- Champagne are rated according to a system known as 'Echelle des Crus,' which rates vineyards on a percentage basis between 80-100%: 90-99% are considered to be Premier Cru and those at 100% are Grand Cru.
- Of the three major production areas in the Champagne region, *Montagne de Reims* is known for pinot noir, *Vallee de la Marne* for pinot noir and pinot meunier and *Cote des Blanc* for chardonnay.
- Champagne must come from Champagne, France to be entitled to the appellation, and secondary fermentation must take place in the bottle.

# France

## Other French Sparklers



- Crémant - methode champenoise wine made outside of Champagne: Jura, Alsace, Loire, Bourgogne, Limoux\*, Bordeaux, Die (Rhône)
- Mousseux- A sparkling wine produced in France that does not have to undergo methode champenoise: Anjou, Limoux\* (Ancestrale\* is another indication of a sparkling wine from Limoux), Bourgogne, Die, Saumur (Loire), Touraine (Loire)
- Limoux:
  - Blanquette de Limoux- The oldest recorded AOC. Has to be produced from at least 90% Mauzac; the other allowed varietals are chardonnay and chenin blanc
  - Blanquette Methode Ancestrale- Has to be 100% Mauzac; due in part to the lack of disgorgement. Traditionally sweeter and cloudier than modern sparkling wines
  - Crémant de Limoux- See Crémant

# Italy

## Prosecco



- Prior to 2009, Prosecco was both the name of the grape (which is now known as Glera) and a style of sparkling wine; primarily from DOCs in the Veneto region: Conegliano-Valdobbiadene, Conegliano, and Valdobbiadene. These areas have since been promoted to DOCG status along with Treviso
- Traditionally, Prosecco was produced in a sweeter (Dry or Extra Dry) style, but with the advancement of technology and the expansion of knowledge winemakers have been producing a dryer style (brut) while maintaining the attractive fruit notes

# Italy

## Prosecco



- Cartizze- Is known to locals as the “Grand Cru” of Prosecco. Consisting of 260 acres situated on a 1,000 foot hill, this vineyard is divided up between many producers and is considered to be the best example of Prosecco due its body, acidity and fruit.
- Because of it’s elevation and position, however, grapes grown in Cartizze vinyards take much longer to ripen and are picked later than in other Prosecco producing areas. This produces a sparkling wine that resembles a broader Champagne style wine than what is commonly known as Prosecco.
- Consumers who are familiar with and expect traditional Prosecco are often disappointed when they first try Cartizze- Prosecco, which is unfortunate as it is an excellent sparkling wine.

# Italy

## Other Italian Sparklers



- Franciacorta- A very small wine growing region located around Lake Iseo within the region of Lombardy. It produces both sparkling and still wines, with just the sparkling holding the DOCG status
  - Grape varieties allowed in the production of Franciacorta are Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco, and no more than 15% Pinot Nero
  - The area adheres to the regulations of Methode Champenoise and is considered to be the next best option to Champagne by most wine critics, Sommeliers and Masters of Wine
- Other Italian sparkling wine styles worth noting are Asti from the Piedmont, Lambrusco from Emilia-Romagna, and Trento (DOC only) from Trentino



# USA

## “American” Sparklers



- U.S sparkling wines have grown leaps and bounds, with the very best being as good as Champagne (Roederer Estate, L’Ermitage, Schramsberg, etc.)
- The U.S. is the only country that still uses the term Champagne on the label. However, it can only be used by wineries that had the name on their labels before 2006, and only if it precedes or is followed by the actual AVA
- We are one of the few countries where sparkling wine is produced throughout the country (most states have a sparkling wine)
- However, there are no regulations specifying how sparkling wine can or should be made, but most producers have adopted the Champagne sweetness level labeling system

# Spain

## Cava



- Cava- A DO that indicates a sparkling wine that is produced in the methode champenoise from Catalonia
- DO regulations state that Cava has to be produced in one of the appropriate regions: Aragon, Basque Country, Castile e Leon, Catalonia, Extremadura, Navarra, Rioja or Valencia (95% of Cava produced is from Penedes, in Catalonia which is called home by Codorniu and Freixenet)
- In the production of Cava only 6 varietals of grapes are allowed to be used: Macabeu, Xarello, Parellada, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Subirat

## Vino Espumosos

- Any sparkling wine that is not Cava



# Notes



- Methode Champenoise
  - Grape Arrival > Pressing > 1st Fermentation > Blending > Bottling > 2nd Fermentation (Liqueur de Tirage is added. Fermentation happens in the bottle) > Riddling (Aging) > Disgorging > Dosage > Bottle Aging
- Sweetness Levels of Sparkling Wine (Champagne AOC)
  - Extra Brut (less than 6 grams of residual sugar per litre)
  - Brut (less than 12 grams)
  - Extra Dry (between 12 and 17 grams)
  - Sec (between 17 and 32 grams)
  - Demi-sec (between 32 and 50 grams)
  - Doux (50 grams)

# Notes

- **Cuvee (Blend) Terms**

- Prestige (Tete de Cuvee)- A producer's very best cuvee
- Vintage- A cuvee produced from grapes picked from a specific year
- Non Vintage- A cuvee produced from a blend of different vintages
- Blanc de blancs - A cuvee produced from only white varietals. In Champagne it is customary to strictly use Chardonnay, even though there is no regulation that prohibits the use of other allowed white varietals
- Blanc de noirs (White from black)- A cuvee produced from only red varietals. In Champagne it is customary to strictly use Pinot Noir, even though there is no regulation that prohibits the use of allowed red varietals
- Rose - Produced either through saignee (bleeding) or the addition of still red wine to the cuvee