

Allison Levine Please the Palate: A world of sparkling wines

Is there anything that screams celebration more than bubbles? Birthdays, graduations, promotions, engagements, weddings, and any other celebration is usually marked with toasts of glasses filled with sparkling wine. And usually, it is Champagne.

Champagne is considered the *crème d la crème* of sparkling wines. But Champagne comes from a specific place and is made with specific grapes. There is a whole world of sparkling wines out there — different regions, different grape varieties, different flavor profiles, and different price points.

To talk about the world of sparkling wines, let us quickly review a few things. When we think of a classic sparkling wine, we think of Champagne. Champagne is made with three grapes – Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Many other regions around the world will use the same grapes in their sparkling wines but other grapes are also used.

It is also important to understand the ways sparkling wine can be made. There is the Champagne Method, also known as the Traditional Method, in which the secondary fermentation happens inside the bottle. Other traditional method made wines include Crémant, Franciacorta, Cava and many domestic sparkling wines.

The Charmat Method, also known as the Tank Method, is where the secondary fermentation happens in a pressurized tank of still wine, instead of in individual bottles. The most famous wine made in the Charmat Method is Prosecco.

Another way to make sparkling wine that is growing in popularity is actually an old method called Ancestral Method. In this method, the secondary fermentation happens inside the bottle but unlike the Traditional Method where the dead yeasts are disgorged, the wine is not disgorged, and sediment remains in the bottle. The trendy Pétillant Naturel (“Pet-nat”) wines are made this way.

As delicious and wonderful as Champagne is, the world of sparkling wine is more than Champagne. There are fabulous sparkling wines made around the world that are not only lovely to drink but can be more affordable than Champagne. And if they are affordable, then that means that we do not need to wait for a special occasion to drink them. Sparkling wines are delicious anytime, anywhere and are wonderful additions to many meals.

While the world of sparkling wine is vast, here are 20 sparkling wines from around the world that I have been enjoying lately that are sure to add some sparkle to your day without hurting your wallet.

French sparkling wines made outside of Champagne using the Traditional method of secondary fermentation in bottle are called Crémant. And, in fact, the oldest recorded sparkling wine (dated 1531) was Crémant de Limoux, a crémant from the Languedoc in the southwest of France.

Langlois-Chateau Crémant de Loire Brut NV (\$25.99)

Located in the Loire Valley, Langlois-Chateau owns and manages 175 acres. More than 60 percent of the estate's production is dedicated to Crémant. The estate is sustainably farmed, and the grapes are hand harvested in small bins and pressed gently. The Langlois-Chateau Crémant de Loire Brut NV is a blend of 60 percent Chenin Blanc (including 10 percent reserve wine), 20 percent Chardonnay and 20 percent Cabernet Franc. The wine is aged for 36 months on the lees resulting in a textured wine with aromas of apple, grapefruit, and lime. This medium-bodied wine has a crisp, mineral finish.

Langlois-Chateau Crémant de Loire Brut Rosé NV (\$22.99)

Made from a blend of 70 percent Cabernet Franc and 30 percent Pinot Noir, this wine is made from juice from the first pressing which spends 18 months on the lees. This wine is bright and vibrant with floral, red currant, strawberry, cherry, and citrus notes as well as autolytic characteristics. It is light-bodied with a crisp, refreshing yet delicate finish.