



SPARKLING WINE VALUES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY ALISON NAPJUS

All Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne, from the famous region in France. Vintners around the world try their hand at sparkling wine production, and their offerings add a great diversity of flavors, styles and textures to the category. Some follow Champagne's lead, basing their wines on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Others use grapes local to their region, such as the Glera grape in Prosecco, or Lambrusco in red sparkling wine from Italy's Emilia-Romagna. Many can be found at affordable prices, including these selections from the Old World and New, all available for \$25 or less per bottle.

The biggest dividing line in the sparkling category is the production technique used to create the bubbles during the secondary fermentation. In Champagne's traditional method, the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle that will later reach the consumer—a process that can be both labor-intensive and expensive. The alternative is the Charmat, or transfer, method, wherein a large quantity of wine is put under pressure during its second fermentation, and the resulting sparkling wine is then bottled.

A sparkler's sweetness level is another factor that comes into play with greater frequency when considering bubbly outside the borders of Champagne. Unlike most still wine, sparkling wine production

generally involves the addition of a small amount of sugar, known as the *dosage*, prior to the final closure of the bottle. The level of sweetness in the bottle depends on the amount of *dosage*. Look to the labels for guidance: Nature or extra brut are the driest; brut, the most common indicator, is dry; and extra dry or dry (often sec or secco on French and Italian bottlings) indicate lightly to frankly sweet wines.

CALIFORNIA

91	MUMM NAPA Brut Napa Valley Prestige NV	\$22
90	GLORIA FERRER Brut Sonoma County Sonoma NV	\$22
90	ROEDERER ESTATE Brut Anderson Valley NV	\$24
89	GLORIA FERRER Blanc de Blancs Carneros NV	\$22
89	SCHARFFENBERGER Brut Rosé Mendocino County Excellence NV	\$23
89	LAETITIA Brut Arroyo Grande Valley Cuvée NV	\$25
88	SCHARFFENBERGER Brut Mendocino County Excellence NV	\$20
88	DOMAINE CHANDON Blanc de Noirs California NV	\$22
88	GLORIA FERRER Blanc de Noirs Carneros NV	\$22
88	MUMM NAPA Brut Rosé Napa Valley NV	\$24
87	PIPER SONOMA Brut Sonoma County Select Cuvée NV	\$18
87	ROCK WALL Grenache Rosé Yolo County 2013	\$22