

WINETALK

379

WINE CONNOISSEURS CLUB OF HAMILTON

February 2023

Coming Functions

Feb 12	Delightful bubbles
Mar 12	Abbey Road
Apr 16	Forrest Wines (Apr 9 is Easter)
May 14	AGM / Options (Mother's Day)

THE BUBBLES EDITION (2023):

It's that time again for the Great Wine Club Biennial

'Bubbles' Tasting. Presented by 'professional' sparkling drinker, Cellar Master Karen Nixey, the

club has some fantastic wines to taste, compare and judge. Some carefully nurtured in the Cellar, some recently purchased, several countries represented, and you will be asked for your opinion on all of them and asked to guess which country they are from and the price paid. One thing is for certain - they will all be delicious. Wonderful drinking on a summer's evening with equally tasty special platters to accompany the wines. Let's have a look at the sparkling processes.



PROSECCO



Prosecco is an Italian DOC or DOCG white wine produced in the Northeast Region of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia region. It is named after the village of Prosecco in the Trieste province. It has been grown in the region since the 16th Century and the area around the town of Prosecco is now a World Heritage Site, mainly due to the growth of the Glera grape, which is the grape of Prosecco. The Glera Grape which is officially protected, is a highly productive grape that ripens late in the season. It has high acidity and a fairly neutral palate which makes it ideal for sparkling wine. Unlike Champagne, Prosecco is produced using the alternative

CHARMAT method in which the secondary fermentation takes place in large stainless-steel tanks rather than in the individual bottle, making the wine less expensive to produce, with the minimum production time 30 days. Higher quality Prosecco using this method will ferment the wine over a longer period (up to round 9 months - Charmat Lungo). 600 million bottles of Prosecco are produced in Italy each year in the region.

CHAMPAGNE



Champagne is a sparkling wine originating and produced in the CHAMPAGNE wine region of France under the strict rules of APPELLATION, that demands special vineyard practices and specific winemaking practices. Three principal grapes are basically allowed in Champagne: Chardonnay, (white grapes), Pinot Noir (red grapes) and Petite Meunier (red grapes).

METHODE-TRADITIONELLE is the traditional method by which Champagne is produced. After primary fermentation and bottling, a second alcoholic fermentation occurs in the bottle. According to the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC), a minimum of 1.5

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years is required to develop the flavour. There are more than 100 Champagne Houses and 19,000 smaller Vignerons (smaller wine-growing producers in Champagne). These companies manage 32,000 hectares of Vineyards in the region.

OTHER METHODS FOR SPARKLING WINES

TRANSFER METHOD: This method is identical to the Traditional method except that wines need not be riddled and disgorged in the same manner. Instead, the bottles are emptied into a pressurised tank and sent through pressurised filters to remove the dead yeast bits (LEES). Can be topped up with wine and any desired sugar level called dosage for the final style. It is re-bottled in a new bottle and then aged.

ASTI METHOD: In this method, sparkling wine is made by primary fermentation of Aromatic grape varieties. In this method the fermentation of the grape juice is stopped earlier so that sweet wines do not lose their character and retain high sugar content. The method does not include secondary fermentation.

CARBONATION METHOD: CO₂ is injected into wine and then the wine is bottled under pressure. Done throughout the world to make inexpensive sparklings.

DOES THE BUBBLE SIZE MATTER IN SPARKLING WINES?

HUAN HOOKE, Australian wine writer thinks so:

Is the size of the bubbles important? Bubbles are an important part of what makes Champagne and other sparkling wines so appealing. They provide the mouth feel, or texture, that we so enjoy. Tiny bubbles also look nicer: finer things are always better than coarse. Just compare a cheap young fizz with an aged sparkling wine and you will see the bubbles are bigger, more like those in carbonated water. Smaller bubbles don't necessarily denote a higher quality wine, but they could be an indication of the wine's maturity. Bubble size is a function of age with less dissolved CO₂ as the wine ages.

High-end sparkling wine is sold old after long maturation with its yeast lees inside the bottle in which it was fermented. Remember, by law Vintage Champagne must have been matured inside the bottle in which it was fermented for at least 3 years before sale. Most Vintage wines have 4-5 years and the best, 10 years or more.

Bubble size is also related to impurities in the wine - microscopic solids that may remain after fermentation. The longer a Champagne ages on its lees the more likely residue, proteins, tannins, yeast cells and tartrates are likely to be deposited in the sediment which is then removed by the riddling and disgorgement process.

Of course, it takes more than fine bubbles to make a great sparkling wine. The quality of the grapes that matters most plus where they were grown and the winemaker's skill.

DOM PERIGNON - WINE AND FOOD MATCHES AND MISMATCHES

As we are talking about Champagnes and sparklings, here is a story from Bob Campbell MW, about mis-matches in food and wine.

Kingsley Wood, owner of First Glass Wines in Takapuna, is a man of habit. For many years he has enjoyed lunch on Christmas Day with the same group of friends at a vineyard on Waiheke Island. They usually start with a pre-taster of Dom Perignon Champagne. This year they toasted Christmas with the same vintage of Dom as last year and were disappointed (Quelle horreur you may say)! It was nothing like the Dom they had tasted the previous year. At first they assumed the loss of quality may have been caused by a low threshold cork taint which can kill flavour without revealing the musty, wet cardboard character we associate with cork taint.



"Then I realised," said Kingsley, "that we had been given a Campari on arrival, something we had never had before. I took a sip of the Campari and re-tasted the Dom. It was even worse, confirming my suspicion that it had reacted badly with the Dom. We often tend to focus on the positive aspects of food and wine matching and overlook the negative reactions that can take place."

Kingsley makes a good point said Bob, "Campari is bitter and may have made the Dom slightly bitter - not a good taste at Christmas. I found many years ago to resist the biscuits on offer when judges take a break at wine competitions. Sweet biscuits also can make wine taste quite bitter. It is actually the same with coffee."

Therefore, the moral of the story is, be careful what you eat before and during a tasting. It can have a big effect on the wine. Look for what you shouldn't eat as much as what would be suitable with the wine (I know I do not eat onions on club day and clean my teeth about 2 hours before going out to a wine tasting - imagine mixing Macleans mint flavours with a glass of beautiful Champagne). Our platters are carefully planned not to overpower but enhance the flavour of our wines. When winemakers come and present at the club, we ask for a list of wines they are bringing and any requests for food. e.g. Dark Chocolate with the reds. The person planning the platters then has an idea of what does or doesn't go with the wines. With all this in mind – wow! - we will all be ready for our stunning bubbles tasting!



Your enjoyment of Champagne is also affected by the company and the surroundings as well. You don't have to be at a smart vineyard on Waiheke Island. Sitting on a beach with good friends, fish and chips and a bottle of Champagne for a special occasion can be equally memorable. Is there any happier, more exciting sound in the world than the popping of a Champagne cork?

FINAL CALLS FOR THE PROPOSED TASMANIAN WINE TOUR

We need to have final numbers for the suggested November Tasmanian Wine Tour by the next meeting 12th February. Unless we get at least 10 members wanting to do the tour, we won't be able to go ahead with this. Please let David know if you are **definitely interested** so we can make decisions.

See you at the Sparkling Wines tasting.....can't wait.

NEXT EVENT FOR WINE CLUB -



SPARKLING WINES TASTING !!!

See you there,

Cheers,

Gay Main

P.S. Attached are some more of the "Santa Photos" from the Xmas function

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