



Sparkling Wines: Alternatives to Champagne for the Holiday Season

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

Reception Wine: 6:00 PM, Formal Tasting: 6:20 PM

Faculty Club, Univ of Toronto, 41 Willcocks Street, Toronto

Members' Fee: \$60; Guests'/Non-Members' Fee: \$85

There is no better way to celebrate the start of the holiday season than with a glass of bubbly. This November, the Toronto Vintners Club presents an extraordinary tasting of affordable options to Champagne. Our tasting will feature sparkling wines from Ontario, California, France, Spain, Italy, and New Zealand. Each region offers a unique variation that gives the Champagne region a run for its money when it comes to exceptional wine quality.

In December 2011, Tim Fish, Senior Editor of Wine Spectator magazine blogged: "Who Needs Champagne When You Have California?" While sparkling wine is nothing new to California winemakers, recently top producers have been refining their flagship cuvées. Our November tasting will include two California bubbly - a NV Schramsberg Mirabelle Brut Rosé and a 2001 Gloria Ferrer Carneos Cuvée. The Mirabelle Brut Rosé is specially crafted blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Schramsberg's select cool-climate vineyards in Carneros, Anderson Valley, and the Sonoma and Marin coastal areas of Northern California. The Carneos Cuvée is Gloria Ferrer's "Tête de Cuvée" (flagship wine). The 2001 vintage is a blend of Pinot Noir (53%) and Chardonnay (47%), offering a synthesis of effusive ripe fruit expression with superb structure and finesse.

New Zealand winemakers have also adopted the méthode champenoise to produce outstanding sparkling wines. Quartz Reef Sparkling (located in Central Otago, South Island) is a hand-picked selected blend of 76% Pinot Noir and 24% Chardonnay from the Bendigo Estate Vineyard. Quartz Reef uses the traditional method to achieve elegance and finesse. Many wine drinkers assume that if it is bubbly and it is Italian, then it must be Prosecco; however, there are many more sparkling wines in Italy, a great example of which is Ferrari's Rosé, a Trento DOC from Northern Italy. The Rosé is 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay and is made using the traditional *metodo classico*. The Trento region is famous for their fuller tasting sparkling wines. Spain is known for producing wonderful 'cava' which literally means cave or cellar but now refers to sparkling wine produced in this country. TVC has procured a 2009 De Nit Rosé Cava from Raventos I Blanc which was listed on the Wine Spectator's Top 100 Wines of the World in 2012 and gets a rave review from Robert Parker.

In Ontario, the wine growing region of Prince Edward County shares a similar climate, limestone based soil and grape varieties as the Champagne region. We will taste one two sparkling wines from this region of Ontario: a 2011 Hinterland Blanc des Blancs Method Traditional and a 2008 Huff Cuvée. According to the Globe and Mail wine critic, Beppi Crosariol, "The owners of Hinterland Wine Co., housed in a former dairy barn in Ontario's Prince Edward County, crush grapes where 48 cows once made their home, crafting some of the most compelling new non-French sparkling wines I've tasted in years." The Blanc des Blancs from Hinterlands is 100% Chardonnay grape sparkling wine aged in large barrels, inspired by some of the great Champagne houses in France. Huff, an award-winning winery, was the first winery in Prince Edward County to release a vintage of méthode champenoise sparkling wine and the all-county Blanc de Noir is an excellent example of how Ontario winemakers are adopting the technique

Finally, a sparkling wine tasting would not be complete without *some* champagne. In order to ensure a full rounded tasting, we have included the Beaumont des Crayeres Grand Prestige Brut Champagne from France. Made of 40% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier, Beaumont des Crayeres is an excellent example of affordable Champagne.

Previous sparkling wine/champagne events have sold out so we urge you to register early to avoid disappointment!

REGISTER/ BUY TICKETS

Register/buy tickets online at

<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=vxqhb4bab&oeidk=a07e8c1nmf2d786f5d6>. You must register online and then can pay by credit card or by cheque. **ALL ticket sales/reservations are final.** Cheques must be received by Friday, November 15th. The cheque-payment option will be disabled at midnight Tuesday, November 12th after which only credit card sales will be accepted until midnight Sunday November 17th or earlier if the event sells out. You will be sent an email confirmation after completing your registration. If you tried to register but did not receive your confirmation, please contact winetastings@torontovintners.org before trying to register again.



Tasting Notes and Information

Ferrari Rosé Metodo Classico (Italy) \$37

"Distinct and very refined, with the fresh fragrance of hawthorne flowers, red currants and wild strawberries. Taste: Dry, clean and elegant, with a delicate finish of sweet almonds." Winemaker's website.

2011 Hinterland Blanc des Blancs Method Traditional (Ontario) \$35

"After a year of aging, the blanc de blanc has the aromatics and flavour profile of a rich and aged champagne. We are very proud of this wine, balancing good fruit, creaminess and bracing acidity. This wine feels like it will age gracefully for 10 to 12 years." Winemaker's website.

2008 Huff Cuvée (Ontario) \$40

"Our all-county sparkling is fashioned in the Methode Traditionnelle manner. Vibrantly structured and imbued with Asian pear, nutmeg and tarte tatin aromas. Blessed with a delicate mousse, it is augmented with a complex melding of coconut, pineapple, marzipan, orange peel and spiced ripe apple; all within a distinctive County minerality." Winemaker's website.

Beaumont Des Crayeres Grand Prestige Brut Champagne (France) \$45

"Classy wine with a harmonious balance between Christmas pudding and perfumed aromas, toasty autolysis and an overall energetic freshness." Score - 4 Stars (out of 5). Decanter World Wine Awards, 2012.

Quartz Reef Method Traditionelle (New Zealand) \$30

"The non-vintage Methode Traditionelle Sparkling is sourced from Gibbston and Bendigo, displays a captivating nose of oyster shell, orange-blossom and granite; the palate very well-balanced with good acidity and touches of lemon zest, green apple and just a faint hint of elderflower on the bone-dry finish. I doubt you will find a better non-vintage New Zealand sparkler." 90 pts. N. Martin, eRobertParker.com, Apr. 2008.

Schramsberg Mirabelle Brut Rosé Methode Traditionnelle (California) \$39

"This sparkling wine is a heck of a value. A blend of 52% Pinot Noir and 48% Chardonnay aged two years on its lees prior to being bottled, it offers tiny, well-defined bubbles, persistent effervescence, and fresh brioche and lemon custard notes intertwined with hints of apple skins and tangerines. Fresh, medium-bodied and crisp, this delightful sparkler sells at a realistic price. It should last for several years." 90 pts. eRobertParker.com, Oct. 2012.

2001 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Cuvée (California) \$63

"A rich and complex nose offers ripe apples and Asian pears that lead to bright berry fruit aromas interlaced with a hint of yeast and toasted brioche. On the palate, this wine is creamy and vibrant with complex layers of baked apple and citrus with perfectly balanced acidity intermingling in a very elegant, vibrant and enduring finish." 94 pts. Wine Enthusiast Magazine's Advance Buying Guide, Nov. 2013.

2009 Cava Rose 'De Nit', Raventos I Blanc, Spain \$26

"The outstanding 2009 De Nit (rosé) has an almost hypnotic, perfect pale hue that is worth the price alone! A blend of classic Cava varieties with 5% Monastrell, it is sourced from 30- to 40-year-old vines from the estate. The nose is very subtle and very pretty with traces of rosewater, fish scale and Morello cherries, all beautifully defined and drawing you in. The palate is crisp and tense on the entry: a minimalist rose cave that is based on freshness and poise rather than delivering fruit intensity. It is a delicate, very pretty, harmonious Cava rosé that is sensual and alluring. Who needs Champagne when Cava can be as good as this? Drink now - 2015+ " 93 points Robert Parker's WA.