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# A Checklist For A Sparkling New Year's Eve

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*c. A selection of sparkling wines? Read*

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Coupes work better as drinking-glass binoculars than as vessels for sparkling wine. BETTMANN ARCHIVE

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**The end of the year countdown is on:** Are you ready to pop the cork? Here's a quick sparkling 101 primer to help you bring in the new year.

**DOSAGE.** No, I don't mean pills, but the level of sweetness in your sparkling wine, if it undergoes a secondary bottling in the traditional method. It comes in a formula that's usually a house secret—sugar, or

wine and sugar—that “corrects” a wine’s acidity or sweetness, depending on the grapes of that year. Dosage is determined by grams over a scale of seven levels: Doux, the sweetest at 50 or more grams of dosage per liter, up to Brut Nature, the driest with zero or fewer than three grams per liter, which showcases the wine’s minerality and pristine fruit. In between are Demi-Sec (32-50), Sec (17-32), Extra Sec (12-17), Brut (12), Extra Brut (fewer than 6 grams).

**GLASSWARE.** Coupe, flute or wine glass? Sparkling wine has always been marketed as a luxury beverage and part of that is the glassware. Coupes, shallow, cup-shaped, short-stemmed glasses, make an elegant statement but do little for enhancing the bubbles of the wine. With a wider surface area, the initial aromatic rush quickly dissipates. They’re now a fixture on the cocktail scene, and vintage or etched styles are making a comeback as an elegant party accessory: In fact, I will probably serve my guests out of those made by the **Morgantown Glass Company** of West Virginia, the same pattern Jacqueline Kennedy chose for her White House. Flutes, either straight or tulip shaped, are for their slender elegance, easy clinking for a toast and ability to show off the bubbles. But, they too, restrict the aroma and palate sensory experience. Turn now, to the traditional white-wine glass that many wine professionals prefer, and which captures bubbles, aromas and taste. The shift reflects a rethinking of Champagne (and other sparklers) as only occasion wines and a recognition that, as a wine, it should be drunk as any other—on any occasion, every day, in a wine glass. (But, never a Mason jar, please.)

Now, down to business. The wine itself.

**STYLE.** Most people associate only Champagne with bubbles, but the sparkling wine world includes gads of other styles—Prosecco and Franciacorta (Italy) as well as well-made sparklers from Italy’s northeast; Cava (Spain), Crémant (France), Méthode Cap Classique (South Africa), sparkling wine from England, Brazil, domestic sparklers from California, New Mexico, New York and more. And that list doesn’t include lower-fizz styles such as Limoux, frizzantes or pet-nats. Many call any sparkler Champagne, but only wines made in the secondary-fermentation bottle method in Champagne are permitted to use that name. In fact, you can’t even call Méthode Champenoise by that name anywhere else but in

Champagne (it is variously called *metodo classico*, MCC, or the traditional method). While Champagne is classic, don't feel like you need to limit yourself only to that. Here are a few others to try (some prices are approximate):



Take five: Italian sparkling wines for the wine PRODUCERS

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**Prosecco:** There are four levels of Prosecco: the DOC version, which is made from Glera grapes grown on the lower flatlands of the appellation, and the DOCG version, the higher-level designation grown in the high-elevation hills of Italy's northeastern [Conegliano Valdobbiadene](#) appellation. Within and at the very top of that higher-quality sector is the Cartizze, the Grand Cru of Prosecco DOCG. These wines will be made in the traditional method or secondary fermentation in the bottle. On the DOC level, try Mionetto Brut (\$15) for an easy-going, crowd-pleasing pop of crisp white fruits (there's a rose version, too). Its Cartizze style offers a richer, deeper almost honied taste that takes you on another realm of Prosecco. This is a luxury wine at a great price (around \$44).

**Other Northeast: Maso Martis Rose Extra Brut, Trentodoc.**

Made of 100% Pinot Noir with four grams of sugar/liter, this is a pretty-in-pink light and crisp wine smacking of small red fruits and berries, inflected with a bit of almond. \$27+/- **Ferrari** is the fashion-forward luxury-level standard bearer of the region, pioneering sparkling wine production since 1902. The Classic Brut is a reliable performer of 100% Chardonnay with ripe yellow apple fruit, white flowers and almond scents. \$25 +/-

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**Franciacorta. Corte Bianca Franciacorta Extra Brut.** From the hills of Lombardy, and made from certified organic grapes—this Chardonnay-driven sparkler (95% and the remainder Pinot Nero/Noir), has very fine bubbles, lots of fresh acidity alongside flavors of freshly picked yellow and white fruit. \$45 +/-



A global trio of sparkling wines for New Year's Eve PRODUCERS

**Cava: Segura Viudas Reserva Heredad,** an iconic cava on the edge of off-dry with honeycomb notes, a bit of brioche white fruits and a persistent bubble. A blend of 75% Macabeo; 25% Chardonnay. \$30

**Crémant. Dirlor-Cadé Crémant d'Alsace Brut Nature Rose.** A bright pop of raspberry fruit from a

revered biodynamic producer. Made of 100% Pinot Noir in the traditional method of secondary fermentation in the bottle, this is a lighter style, creamy and satisfying fresh and friendly. \$25+/-

**Méthode Cap Classique: Graham Beck Brut NV.** Made from a near-even split of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, this is a reliable classic from an MCC pioneer. Light on the yeasty aromas and inflected with tropical and stone fruits, this is a clean, no-nonsense sparkler that will go from aperitif to past midnight. \$20-23-ish.



A wide range of sparklers from entry level to cuvee GLORIA FERRER

**Domestic:** Two sides of the Carneros AVA. On the Sonoma side, look to any bottle from **Gloria Ferrer**, the first winery in Sonoma's Carneros AVA to produce sparkling wine. The approachable and affordable (\$25-35) line of Brut, Brut Rose, Blanc de Noirs (Rose) is an authentic expression of the cool-climate region without breaking the bank (. But, if you want to splurge (\$80-85), go for the Cuvee, the producer's top bottle (and a pretty one, at that), and you'll get soft and refined bubbles, a tart grapefruit character and a clean finish with hints of almond.

New to me this year were two sparklers from the **Frank Family Vineyard**, from the Napa Valley side



of the Carneros. The Brut Rose (2017) is a creamy raspberry- and strawberry-inflected bubbly with d some good complexity. Light notes of tart ment, and perfect with appetizers. The white and with fresh-cut green-apple notes and Granny Smith, along with traditional- che, toasted hazelnuts. \$55 *Check out some of my other work [here](#).*

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