

Champagne & Sparkling Wine



5 Things You Need To Know

1. Basics:

Champagne or sparkling wine is wine with significant levels of carbon dioxide present, thus creating the tiny bubbles consumers are familiar with. Only the sparkling wines produced in France from a relatively small region in the northeastern part of the country may be labeled Champagne. Other sparkling wines can be produced from anywhere in the world. So the phrase "all Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne" is very appropriate.

The Champagne we know and love comes exclusively from the Champagne region of France and claims the honor of being the most famous of the sparkling wines. Technically, it is the only sparkling wine that may be referred to as "Champagne." Bubbly from all other regions in the world are simply referred to as "sparkling wine." Italy, Spain, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. give France a run for the money by producing some fantastic sparkling wines and they are often less expensive.

The classic blend of grapes used to make Champagne or sparkling wine is Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. You may also see labels referring to "blanc de blanc, blanc de noir, rose, brut, demi sec and extra dry. These indicators are really simple and meant to describe the style of the wine or the type of grape used.

- *Blanc de blanc- simply means white from white, typically 100% Chardonnay used in the blend*
- *Blanc de noir- white from black, typically Pinot Noir grapes producing white wine; often however, you will see a pinkish tint to the wine*
- *Rose- a blend of the classic Champagne grapes often with an additional variety and finished with a very apparent pink color*

- *Brut- typically the driest sparkling wines*
- *Extra dry- not exactly dry, leaning towards some sweetness*
- *Demi sec- meaning half dry; typically a little more than 'half' and are noted for their moderate to medium sweetness*



2. What's it taste like?



The Champagne taste is similar to a white wine but with the addition of bubbles. Typically a dry wine, it can be sweeter depending on the version consumed. One will often hear the words toasty and yeasty used when describing sparkling wine. These are not particularly appealing sounding but are signs of a well-made bubbly.

Prosecco, a vibrant sparkling wine produced in Italy, is currently enjoying tremendous popularity for its easy drinking style and reasonable prices.

Washington State sparkling wines are typically a very good value and of a high quality, but California remains by far the largest producer of sparkling wines in the United States. Even some French influence has been established with the likes of Roederer Estate, Domaine Chandon and Mumm.

3. What's it go with?



Champagne! Wedding toasts come to mind as well as New Year's Eve. But the truth is that sparkling wines are a fine alternative to a cocktail or a glass of still wine. When pairing with food, desserts or appetizers typically are the natural pairing, but sparkling wine is versatile. And sparkling wine is much more than a "special occasion" wine and pairs beautifully with many everyday food choices. It's great with a Margherita pizza, chicken or salad or hard-to-match cuisines like many Thai, Japanese or other Pan Asian dishes.

- 🍷 *As the sales person, recommend three possible choices for your customer. Show them a low priced, a medium priced and one of your more premium offerings. You will often find the customer will buy the top shelf item that you have taken the time to show them.*

4. Sparkling Wine in LCB Stores-by the numbers



Washington State stores currently offer 41 sparkling wines including 10 Champagnes. They range in price from the very inexpensive California mass produced wines to the classic Dom Perignon at \$149.99. There are various sparklers from Spain, Spumante from Italy, and of course plenty of domestic labels from which to choose.

- 📈 In state stores, sparkling is typically set on the shelf by price; the French Champagne usually is the highest price and will occupy the top shelf. Price descends from R to L on the shelf.***

5. Category Leaders

In Washington State stores the best sellers in the Sparkling Wine category are:

- 🍷 Moet Chandon Brut Imperial Champagne (France)***
- 🍷 Martini & Rossi Spumante (Italy)***
- 🍷 Domaine Ste Michelle Brut Sparkling (WA)***
- 🍷 Cooks Brut (CA)***

 **Korbel Brut (CA)**

There are many other Champagne and sparkling wine labels from different parts of the world available in state stores as Wine Specialty or HUB items; and grocery and wine stores. Get to know some of them (especially those from France and the Napa and Sonoma Valleys), take a look at the labels and do some investigating. The payoff in your ability to better serve your customer will be tremendous.