

# APAHA

Held at \_\_\_\_\_

Photos by Shehla Z. Shah

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Jing Nghik, Shehla Zakallah, Kuan Zhao, Hoang Mai



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Shenila Humuyun, Zahid Naseem



Stephen Eng, Honoree Baayork Lee



Tammy Su and Dr. Michael Su

## WINE

### Star-Studded Sips

# Sparkling Wines

by PHILIP CUISIMANO

June is a big month for sparkling wine sales as consumer demand spikes along with a surge of weddings that are traditionally planned for this period, as well as the many graduation celebrations that also occur. Indeed, only in the month of December is there a greater clamor for the bubbly. With this in my mind, let's focus on one of my favorite types of wine, those that sparkle.

What is distinctive about sparkling wine is its effervescent bubbles or what Perignon figuratively called the "stars".

Legend has it that Champagne (the template for all Sparkling Wines) was first discovered by the Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon in the 17th Century. Perignon, the cellar master for the French abbey of Hautville, was blending wines and, by chance, stumbled upon the mix for Champagne and shouted to his fellow monks "Come quickly brothers. I am drinking stars!" This legend endures today and the name of that Benedictine monk is immortalized forever in his namesake, arguably the most famous wine in the world, Dom Perignon Champagne from the venerable house of Moet et Chandon.

How much of the legend is true is anybody's guess, but the story is romantic and none can deny it's efficacy as a marketing tool. What is distinctive about sparkling wine is its effervescent bubbles or what Perignon figuratively called the "stars".

In order to understand how the bubbles become a part of these wines we must first explain "Fermentation", a natural chemical process in which the sugar in grape juice is transformed into alcohol. Sparkling wine starts out as a still wine and undergoes a secondary fermentation by the addition of sugar and a fermenting agent such as yeast. During the secondary fermentation, carbon dioxide is released, creating the bubbles.

Where the secondary fermentation occurs determines a wine's pedigree and also its cost. The two most popular techniques that produce the highest level of quality are the "Methode Champenoise" and the "Charmat Process".

Methode Champenoise is the traditional practice that was originally devised by the wine-makers of Champagne (France) in which the secondary fermentation occurs within the very bottle that is offered for sale. This technique is exacting and requires time, labor, and patience. The Methode Champenoise procedure is utilized all over the world and many consider it to be the "Gold Standard" for producing sparkling wine. The labels on bottles of wine produced in this manner will state "Methode Champenoise" or "Fermented in This Bottle".

In contrast, bubbly produced by the Charmat Process involves placing the still wine into large, specially constructed holding containers where the secondary fermentation is induced before being transferred to bottles as a finished product. This procedure is less costly and produces very nice wines at more competitive prices. Sparklers produced in this manner will state somewhere on the label that the "Charmat Process" was utilized.



You can find quality wines in all price ranges. Not only are sparklers traditionally preferred for weddings and other celebrations, they are perfect for any occasion that calls for wine because they pair well with meat, fish, and even dessert. Of course, they are fine for just sipping by the pool, too.

**Wilson Creek Almond Flavored Champagne**  
This California winery is located in the Temecula Valley and offers this unique sparkler produced utilizing the Charmat Process. The blend is composed of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and French Columbard grapes. Almond flavoring is added to produce a fun bubbly that everyone should enjoy. This wine is a bit on the sweet side and is a celebration all by itself. \$19.00

**Efix Brut Spumante**  
This Spumante (Italian for Sparkling Wine) comes from the island of Sardinia, home to some of the world's oldest vines. This offering is produced from the Vermentino grape and is dry, medium-bodied, and very tasty. The bubbles are light and the fruit flavors really shine with notes of tropical fruits like mango and grapefruit that entertain the palate. \$18.00

**Castellblanch Brut Zero N.V. Cava**  
Cava is Spanish for "sparkling" and this wine is produced utilizing the traditional "Methode Champenoise" process. The cuvee is medium-bodied, crisp and brisk with an elegant, underlying hint of toastiness. An example of a nice sparkler at a price to fit most budgets. \$11.00

Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit [speconline.com](http://speconline.com) for the store nearest you.